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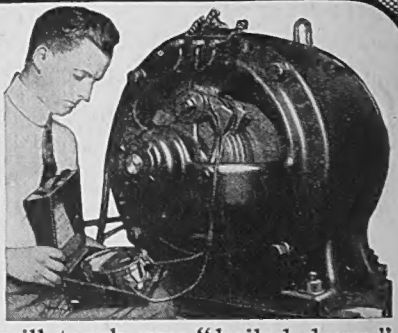

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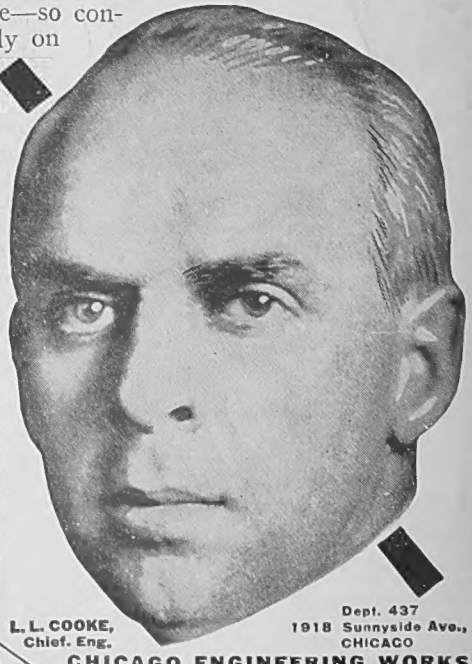

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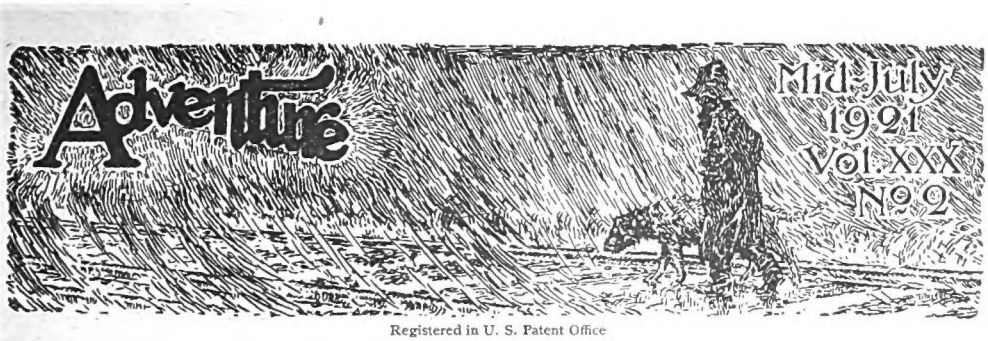

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THROUGH the dense forests of eighteenth-century New York it ran, guarded by the Black Death and the Red Death — the mysterious Doom Trail, sinister alike to Dutch and English and their Iroquois allies. And toward this Trail the ruined ex-Jacobite *Ormerod* sets his face to win an empire for England and retrieve his own fortunes. "THE DOOM TRAIL," a five-part story of the frontier, by Arthur D. Howden Smith, begins in the next issue.

ZIPI-ZIPI-ZIPI. The three searchers for It-That-Walks-Up hear the strange sound drift on the night air as they push through the Latin-American jungle. "THREE MEN SEEKING," a complete novelette by W. C. Robertson and H. Bedford-Jones in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

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Authors of "Toyama," "The Phoney Man," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE PORTUGEE KID'S PUSH

IT WAS a night of sudden wintry gusts. Off along the railroad embankment an empty kerosene can went rattling away with tinny clamor. Down in that famous hang-out or jungle, The Willows, pillared high and writhed low among soughing trees, the naked gladness of two hobo fires. Around the one fire eleven tattered figures sprawled; about the others two moved restlessly, gathering wood-chips and broken willow branches for their more meager blaze. There was a presage of rain in the uneasy dark.

The two fires were widely spaced apart. It was significant. That wide interval, the isolation of the lazy many from the toiling two, marked a difference. It was a difference old as the clan. It began when first was fire and the Neanderthal fire-owner clubbed out of his private circle of wood-heat and wolf-frightening light those less than he in strength and weapons and not of his immediate cave. To the lonely two the popular blaze was tabu.

These twain were fake hoboes. Off beyond their scantier fire bulked a covered wagon, lettered in black and crimson, "Bigley's Circus and Congress of Wild Animals;" more remotely, among lanky trunks of willow, a horse could be heard crunching and stamping.

The two were poster men preceding a wagon-show. They worked. That was the disgrace, the stigma. They lacked altogether the efficiency in living without work which marks the blown-in-the-glass stiff, the true hobo article. They were that sort scorned by all good rodeos. They were gay-cats.

The eleven about the popular blaze were most diminutive hoboes in man-sized cast-offs. They were like a pigmy people. There was a curious gnome-like spryness about such movements as they made.

They were road-kids. They were runaway boys who had wandered into hobodom and found its ways sweet. It chanced that they were all one push or following. Their

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leader and instructor in hobo ethics was a fifteen-year-older called the Portugee Kid. The youngest was Crybaby Kid, nine years of age.

There are many similar road-kid pushes. The boy victim of the *Wanderlust* drifts almost immediately into a certain one of the three categories of road-kids. There is the youngster who hoboes in the company of an older vagrant and in return for his protective strength and sundry lessons in the hobo trade begs for him both money and handouts. Another sort is the lad who unites with other boys and thus becomes numerically strong enough to keep from being preyed upon—so strong in fact as to be able to prey upon others in turn. The third category comprises such as have graduated from either of the two previously named schools and go hoboing masterless and primitively on their own.

It was only on the grudging sufferance of Portugee Kid's push that the two gay-cats were allowed to jungle up in The Willows. The gay-cats were hulking figures, greater in stature and strength by far than any one of the road-kids. But the road-kids had the strength of numbers; they were a pack; and road-kids traveling in pack are vicious as a gang of rats. Gay-cats are as a matter of truth the road-kid's wonted prey. A gay-cat is likely to have money because he works, and that money makes him good pickings for the little Tatars.

A push of road-kids on the trail of a chosen gay-cat is not a pretty sight. Hunting together like a pack of cub wolves, they close in upon their man in some district of vacant lots or in an alley among warehouses. Small boys leap upon him from all sides.

If he resists stubbornly, some kid springs upon his back and applies the dreaded strong-arm. That is the road-kid's standby. A kid upon a man's back, his knee to the man's spine, one arm under his chin—and an irresistible leverage is in operation. A puny youngster applying the strong-arm scientifically can lay a full-grown and husky man flat and gasping upon his back in almost the flutter of an eye.

THERE was a clattering of displaced stones and then a crashing among fallen leaves. Rushed precipitately down the railroad embankment and well into the circle of road-kids the little ragged-eared yellow dog, Gay-Cat. Wise small head cocked to one side, a foreleg raised and slightly bent, mouth open and expectant-eyed, he abruptly halted among the eleven and stood motionless as a tawny metal statuette.

The boys lifted on elbow and greeted him with startled whoops of delight. They knew the dog.

"Ef it ain't the Gay-Cat 'n' no foolin'!"

"Hello, youse, ol' hobo, Gay-Cat; where's the Frisco Kid?"

He came slowly into the bland firelight. He too wore overlarge cast-offs. The trousers were rolled up bulkily at the bottom; the coat sleeves hid his thin-wristed and dirty hands as in a pair of muffs. He was a meager-framed fifteen-year-older with sun-tanned, childish face in which were deep-sunk tragic eyes, the blue of the gipsying Celt. He had all the seeming of a much younger road-kid, but already had he been graduated by one of the preparatory schools of hobodom. He was a free road-kid.

"Hello, Frisco," greeted the Portugee Kid. "Which way youse headin'?"

The boy nodded round the circle and went at once toward the smoke-blackened kerosene can steaming fragrantly on the fire.

"Headin' north, Portugee," he answered. "Upper Illinois and Chi is on me line of travel."

"Better keep outer upper Illinois, Frisco."

The Kid lifted a moist nose from the open top of the kerosene can.

"Why the orders?"

" 'Cause upper Illinois ain't safe fer road-kids nohow. The roads is all guarded by sheriff's depooties and rubes with shotguns. Me and me push is drillin' south on the double."

"But what's the idee? Is every one turned horstile to boes?"

The Portugee Kid snorted.

"Boes, nothin'! Me and me push shoved through Joliet from Chi yisterday on the C. & E. I., and there was all kinds of excitemint round the State prison—sireens a-blowin' and men all along the railroad tracks a-watchin' with Winchisters. It's some guy wot made his gitaway from stir. Better keep outer upper Illinois, Frisco."

Full strong in The Willows was Portugee's push that night. The Frisco Kid sniffed rapturously the sticky odors from

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the kerosene can, then directed a look of deferential inquiry toward Portugee. The Gay-Cat, dogging the Kid's steps, turned also his little black eyes in wistful interrogation. Crybaby Kid intercepted the mute appeal. He said grandly:

"He'p yerse'f, Frisco. We-uns has scoffed some time ergo."

Portugee Kid spoke a short word to the Crybaby Kid. Crybaby got up from his railroad tie thereat and searched in the litter of old newspapers and empty cans until he found two cardboard biscuit cartons. These he slit down one side and spread out into flat improvised plates.

The Frisco Kid appropriated the railroad tie vacated by Crybaby. The Gay-Cat climbed upon the tie also, putting his pipe-stem forelegs upon the Kid's lean shank and lifting himself almost upright thereby the better to watch Crybaby, his quivering nose going now to the right, now to the left, as he followed attentively Crybaby's every move.

With a flat stick Crybaby heaped one cardboard plate with the meat, potatoes, onions, carrots and bread of the "combination" stewing in the can. He carried it to the Frisco Kid. The Kid sat up and, balancing the smoking mess gingerly upon his knees, fell to eating without thanks or other ceremony. Inelegantly, quickly, greedily, he gorged himself.

Crybaby placed on the tie beside the Frisco Kid a plate for the dog. Curtly and voraciously the Gay-Cat attacked the hot food. With low moans of joy he bolted whole potatoes and lengths of carrots and chunks of meat big as a man's fist. Great puddles and spills of gravy vanished at a hurried flicker of his red tongue.

"Say, Frisco, thet's some cute li'l dorg, thet Gay-Cat puppy," said Crybaby suddenly.

He was standing over the Kid's tie, watching with serious thought the happily moaning Gay-Cat.

"An' wot a gorgeus appetite fer sech a li'l feller! Say, has he ever had the blue ribbings?"

The Kid did not pause in his eating. He shook his head.

"Well, I'll bet now he's had the pedergee; eh, Frisco?"

Again the Kid shook his head. But he felt there was something in all these questions to which he had to answer no, which sounded derogatory to his dog.

"No, he ain't never had the pedergee that I knows of," he admitted; then proudly, "but he had the mange somethin' fierce last Summer!"

"I knowed it, Frisco; I jes' knowed he had somethin'. He's some dorg all right. An' smart, too. I'll bet yer couldn't lose a dorg like him. I'll bet yer could sell him an' he'd git away somehow an' foller yer like a good hobo buddie, noseyin' yer out clear acrost the country. A dorg like him oughter be wo'th a heap o' money, don't youse think?"

The Frisco Kid paused in the engrossing business of eating. He looked slowly round the circle of fire-tinged eyes that were watching him with an attention oddly canine and sober. His gaze fixed at last on Crybaby.

Nine-year-old Crybaby was a tiny tad in overalls, faded to an oil-stained cream color, and blue denim shirt open at the babyish sun-burned neck. He had left his ragged cap and man-size coat reposing beside the tie the Frisco Kid had appropriated to his own use. His bright hair was yellow as a new broom. In the leaping play of the terra-cotta flames his face, despite a certain artful assumption of manliness, looked very soft-curved and winsomely infantile.

"Aw, Crybaby," objected the Kid. "What yer beefin' about anyway?"

"Jes' this, Frisco," said Crybaby, leaning over, his large brown baby eyes dull and smoky with covetous desire. "Yer don't wanter sell thet Gay-Cat to a stiff like me, does yer? Jes' fer a week er two. I'll git yer real money fer him. An' then he'll come back to yer like I says, noseyin' yer out clear acrost the country."

"Aw, say now, Crybaby. Lay off thet stuff, will yer? I couldn't think of partin' with Gay-Cat. Not for no money—not for all the money in the world!"

At that positive answer Crybaby looked as if he were going to live up to his monaker or road-name. His round baby face showed an utterness of woful dismay.

The Frisco Kid suddenly softened. He felt the acute stab of sympathy. He saw himself but a few months since, ere the Gay-Cat had come to gladden his life, the yearning counterpart of poor Crybaby Kid. Hastily he explained:

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"YER don't understand what Gay-Cat is to me, Crybaby. I used to be the kid of Frisco Red. He was a big fat husky stiff, but so lazy and shif'less he would 'a' starved but for me beggin'. He snared me to the hobo life when I was a measly little shaver of twelve.

"For three year, up until a coupla months ago when Gay-Cat shoves along, I begged jack and handouts for that stiff. I used to keep him in drink-money regular, 'cause when he was full of booze he laid off some on beatin' me. He were a wonder for givin' beatin's, Frisco Red. I used to ermagine how it 'ud feel without no black-and-blue marks from his shoes all over me. And then along comes Gay-Cat.

"He were a measly mongerl that hadn't had nothin' but wind-puddin' to eat and kicks and punches moster his sweet life. He was the leariest, scariest, most horstile hobo dog I ever seed. He was sich a 'fraid-cat he wouldn't take even a handout from me without scrunchin' down in the dust and whinin' sick-like and thinkin' I meant to hit him, when all I wanted to do was hug his or'nary ol' hobo head. But I snared him into likin' me, and he lost his leary ways, and I erdopted him for my buddie.

"But Frisco Red thought Gay-Cat 'ud a-hurt me beggin'. He beat me up somethin' turrible 'cause I let Gay-Cat drill right along and didn't try to lose him. He tried to croak off Gay-Cat by drowndin' him in a covered hoss-trough near Sac in Californy.

"I turned horstile against Red then; but I never could 'a' had the nerve on'y for Gay-Cat. I went at Red like I was crazy with alky. And Red with a razor, too, wavin' it around and hollerin' he'd carve me up.

"First thing, I got that razor. Then I got Red. It were the Gay-Cat that changed me and give me the guts to do it. I'd still be a-beggin' and a-slavin' for Red if Gay-Cat hadn't come drillin' along. But Red, I sure surprized that stiff. I gives him the strong-arm. I curled him gaspin' for air upon his back in the dirt. All the bums with our push seen me done it.

"Now I ain't no beggar for nobody but me and Gay-Cat. I'm a free road-kid and so's Gay-Cat, and we likes the life. I wouldn't sell my buddie; no, not for no money. Why ever did yer ask? Yer must be bug-house, Crybaby. Why did yer think yer could buy Gay-Cat off'n me?"

Answered Crybaby surlily—

"Aw, I thought I'd git a thousand bullets in good solid jack fer him, thet's wot!"

"A thousand dollars?" repeated one called the Swede Kid, his tow-head silvery and oldish-seeming in the flickering cast of tawny firelight. "How youse talks! Yer mus' be one o' them millionnaires er somethin'!"

Asked another, Cigaret Jimmy, significantly—

"Wot brand o' forty-rod does youse most fill up on, Crybaby?"

"Don't youse laff at me, yuh fellers!"

The Crybaby Kid's lips were petulant and beginning to tremble.

"I never meant no hurt to the dorg. I thought mebbe I could buy Gay-Cat from youse, Frisco, an' then sell him to Miss Heffernan fer a thousand dollars. She's sold dorgs fer thet much—she tole me so herse'f—and I thought mebbe she'd buy Gay-Cat, er else sell him on commission an' hand me the cash, see? I never meant no harm, Frisco an' fellers. I jes' wanted to make some jack, jes' wanted to——"

At length and broken-heartedly the Crybaby Kid began to cry. The derisive grins and continual snickers had been too much for him.

No one noticed, in the sudden chill embarrassment caused by that *faux pas* in road-kid etiquette, that one of the two gay-cats about the other blaze had risen to his feet. He was a big slouch-shouldered fellow, smudgy-faced with a week's stubble of red hairs. Stooping as if engaged in the business of gathering wood for the fire, he drew near the circle of road-kids as if to overhear what was going forward.

CHAPTER II

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE

THE Portugee Kid gave the road-kids the "office" to lay off the rough stuff. Crybaby was making his whole push look like a regular kindergarten. A cold flash of command out of amber Iberian eyes traveled from face to face and abruptly quieted the boys, even Crybaby, who dared thereafter only an occasional wobegone snuffle. Portugee then turned to the Frisco Kid.

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"Don't mind Crybaby," he apologized, a dark flush on his face. "He's on'y been with me a coupla months an' hasn't had much chance ter learn."

"But this Miss Heffernan," queried the Kid. "Who's that dame?"

Portugee was visibly surprized.

"Don't know Miss Heffernan, Frisco? Why, where yuh been doin' yer boin'? I thought every stiff this side o' the Mississipp 'nd specially road-kids sure knew her!"

The Frisco Kid felt a trifle uneasy at his social slip in displaying ignorance. All at once he heard, from far down the railroad embankment, the deep thrumming of an approaching train. On a slap of wind came the spine-tingling shrill of its whistle. He felt glad for the momentary interruption.

Above The Willows, from around an abrupt curve, a headlight burst out like a blazing eye. Ponderously the locomotive thundered along the embankment, shaking the earth, shooting fire between its grinding wheels. Came a long line of dust-raising coaches, shifting with breath-taking rapidity, clacking by in endless persistence; then the observation car, as sudden as the headlight, and a lady in green and a little golden-haired girl looking down over the gilded handrail; and then the train was a fast dwindling beam in the gusty night.

Thick, oily-smelling smoke fell like soot about the boys huddled around the fire. Presently they heard the shrill grinding of brakes as the train slowed down for the water-tank where the massive locomotive would slake its thirst.

Said the Frisco Kid, with an effect of ease and knowledge, at this first opportunity to make himself heard:

"Oh, Miss Heffernan—she's some rich dame then. Must be when she can give a cool thousand for a single measly dog."

"Naw, she ain't so rich; jist comfortable-like," returned Portugee. "She's a ole maid wot lives in Middletown a coupla dozen miles up the track. But she's good ter hoboes. A stiff don't have ter batter no back doors all over thet town ef he knows where she lives. Why, there's boes thet has gone fifty 'n' a hundert miles off'n their line o' travel jist ter throw their feet in her direction. Say, Frisco, how's it no one guv yer the office ter panhandle her when yuh headed this way?"

"I dunno; but she sure must be a good meal-ticket all right, Portugee. Setdowns, I s'pose."

"Yuh betcha. Setdowns in the dinin'-room, waited on by herse'f an' her nigger cook, Mammy Selina. An' sich setdowns—reg'lar farmhouse horspertality! But she don't allow no grown bums ter sleep over in her house. On'y road-kids.

"Tell yuh wot, Frisco, she's plumb crazy 'bout road-kids. She has a iron bed in a li'l rag-carpeted room up under the roof jist fer road-kids ter pound their ear in. Many's the kid wot has flopped there fer a night. Slep' there myse'f oncet, an' so's most o' my push. One o' the bunch was up there on'y last week."

"Thet was me," spoke up Crybaby Kid between snuffles. "I was on me own then; the push ditched me jes' south o' Chi. I made a bee-line fer Miss Heffernan's on a freight headin' south.

"She done treated me royal, all right. Chicken 'n' dumplin's 'n' marmalade on ginger cookies, an' a whole special chocolate layer-cake jes' fer me. I stayed two nights in thet ole whitey bed. An' breakfast in the mornin's—creamy mush 'n' hot cakes 'n' ham an' eggs 'n' three cups o' java afore I blew back to pick up the push.

"She didn't like none to see me go, Miss Heffernan. Kinder hinted round as she wanted to erdopt me.

"Yer see, she'd jes' made a big stake sellin' a year-dale dorg she raised hernse'f to a big gee in Chi. Thet guy must be plumb loco 'bout dorgs 'cause he guv her a thousandy roundy dollars fer thet year-dale. Thet's why I wanted to buy Gay-Cat—to git to thet big gee fer mebbe a thousand more. I tole the push all about it when I came back, but the push, they wouldn't believe it.

"Miss Heffernan showed thet thousand right afore my eyes, an' I even seed where she kept it hid. But I ain't coughed none o' thet to the gang 'cause she said she done trusted me. I'm afeered kinder thet ef I tole the gang some kid 'ud blab to the wrong party, like a yegg er strong-arm guy on the road, yer know."

"But this dame don't keep that money hid in her own house, does she?" asked the Frisco Kid, dismayed for her. "She must be a little queer up-stairs."

"Oh, she's queer up-stairs all right," affirmed Portugee Kid. "But she's the nicest, queerest up-stairs person I ever

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see'd. She lives all alone with about thirty er forty dorgs on the road outside town, an' because she's horstile ter everybody but boes the rest o' the townies look on her sorter like a witch. But they're a mean ornery crowd o' skinflints as 'ud set the dorgs on yuh, while she takes yer in an' feeds yer steak smothered in onions."

"She don't keep them forty dogs in her house, same as her money, does she?"

"Yuh betcha she don't! There's a kinda buggy er hoss-shed runs around behind the house, like the place was oncet a road-house, an' thet hoss-shed is all fenced up with wire screenin' an' the dorgs behind, barkin' like a bunch o' dern fools whenever a stranger comes. Thet's how she makes her livin', raisin' them dorgs; perlice dorgs an' year-dales, mainly.

"She's a queer un, all right. Thet's why she hides her money in the house. Lost some in a bank-failin' oncet, an' she don't trust money out of her sight no more."

THE Frisco Kid chanced to turn his head, in flipping away the butt of a burned cigaret. Midway between the two hobo fires and so near that he could overhear every word uttered by the boys was the big slouch-shouldered gay-cat. It was difficult to distinguish the fellow; his outline was dimmed and blurred by reason of his position, remote from either fire in the shadow of the willow-trees.

But the sound of rattling leaves had not come from him. He was standing perfectly motionless, not even making a pretense of gathering wood-chips. As the Frisco Kid glimpsed him, he was cocking his bulbous head to one side in an attitude of harkening.

The rattle of leaves underfoot persisted, and into the jungle, in single file, slouched spinelessly three newcomers. Evidently the trio had arrived on that clamorous passenger train, having ridden the blind-baggage cars or rods beneath until they had been ditched when the train halted at the water-tank.

They were full-grown and husky fellows, all three. Each had a bleak-edged, emaciated, remarkably sallow face, the typical hobo face.

Unlike the road-kids, they were not clad in ill-fitting cast-offs. The forlorn rags of the road-kid are part and parcel of his efficiency. They give his piteous song and dance—his begging story—a certain poignant note of realism, most appealing to the hearts of large-bosomed women at the time of crucial need.

These full-grown, bleak-faced hoboes cultivated another sort of efficiency. It was not for them to look travel-dusty and out-at-elbows. The nearer they resembled in cleanliness and respectability of attire the folk they panhandled, the better for their stomachs.

Each wore black overalls outside trousers and close-buttoned coat. Neckerchiefs were wound about their throats, and on their heads were tight-fitting dark caps. One wore over his overalls a blue trainman's jumper. At the first farmhouse or community to be battered for a handout the overalls that protected trousers from oil-stains and dust of railroading, the neckerchiefs that kept cotton shirts clean, and even the blue jumper would be sloughed off and cached away beneath a bush or rock-pile.

Forth would they emerge as from so many drab chrysalides, white of shirt collar, clean of trousers and coat. To the suspicious eye of the housewife and even to the cynical eye of patrolman or constable there would be naught to mark them as anything but respectable workmen overtaken by temporary hard luck.

They made at once for the fire of the push. To the road-kids, they nodded greeting with an odd civility that was almost deference. But they had every right to join Portugee Kid's push in common community and to help themselves to the road-kids' stew, as they quietly proceeded to do. No gay-cats, these, to be ignored, isolated and tabued. Here were three blown-in-the-glass.

THE Frisco Kid looked quickly at the gay-cat eavesdropping in the shadows. But the burly fellow had become aware of the Kid's surveillance. Stooping and picking up wood-chips and twigs, he was moving circuitously back toward his own fire. Perhaps the appearance of the three blown-in-the-glass stiffs had added to his caution.

"Who's them bums over at that other fire, Portugee?" asked the Kid suddenly.

Portugee made a grimace of loathing.

"Gay-cats!"

"An' they'd better keep their distance, them measly scissor-bills," spoke up Cigaret

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Jimmy, as if he too had noticed the eavesdropper. "I ain't got no use fer them gay-cats. We ought never ter allowed 'em ter jungle-up here anyways."

"Well, it was on'y because one o' them bums used ter be a blowed-in-the-bottle as good as yuh 'n' me," explained Portugee.

"But he's gone ter the dorgs now," persisted Cigaret surlily. "He's travelin' with a sure enough gay-cat, an' wot's more he's woikin' like a gay-cat hisself. He's bill-postin' fer Bigley's Circus. See thet hoss an' wagon off ter one side?"

"Which of the two no-accounts do yer mean?" asked the Frisco Kid. "That one I jes' catched inchin' up here, tryin' to git an earful 'bout Miss Heffernan an' her thousand-dollar year-dale?"

"Was he listenin', Frisco. I thought as how he was pickin' up chips."

"Was he listenin'? Aw, say now, Portugee! He were snoopin' round on the edge of the firelight, and his ears was big as cauliflowers an' hangin' out a mile.

"Listenin'? Why, he had his mouth gawpin' open like he was catchin' flies! But he got me when I give him a nasty look, and he pussy-foots it right back where he belongs and no foolin'! That ain't the gay-cat yer mean—the big fat stiff?"

"That's him," Portugee nodded. "The fat one, the strawberry blond."

"What's his monaker?"

"Dunno, Frisco. Haven't hearn his pal call him any yet," said Portugee. "But I'm sure I seen him some time ergo, some place. I know his face, but I jist can't place it. But I'll lay money thet when I seen him last he was travelin' hobo fashion as a real blowed-in-the-glass. How'd I 'a' noticed him otherwise?"

"Mebbe he's some old-timer wot has lost his kid," spoke up the Swede Kid sagely, "an' has growed too fat an' lazy, wot with easy livin' off his prushun beggin', to git by as a hobo alone."

"Er mebbe," was Cigaret Jimmy's conjecture, "he's a old-timer wot has toined horstile ter everybody an' gone in fer gun-work. He's got a ugly face, an' his graft don't look no good ter me. Bill-postin', huh! There's somethin' crooked underneath."

"He looks kinder familiar to me, too," said the Frisco Kid thoughtfully. "Think I'll give him the once over and clost up."

The burly gay-cat who had been eavesdropping sat hunched before the chattering blaze in a gloomy attitude, chin cupped in hand. But under his heavy brows he was watching the Frisco Kid as he drew near, the dog at his heels.

The man's face looked coarse and bloated from the stubble of red hairs on his cheek. His nose was fatly bulbous.

The Frisco Kid recognized with a start that nose and bloated face. So did the Gay-Cat. The dog backed away, hair bristling along his spine, a low growl rumbling in his throat.

"Hello, Frisco Red."

The man that had formerly been the Kid's hobo-master did not look up. Morosely he studied a red wood-ember that had been spewed out at his feet.

" 'Lo, Kid," surlily in a voice that throat-trouble or a liking for strong whisky had thickened into an unbelievably hoarse bass.

"What yer doin' nowadays, Red?"

"Can't youse see?"

"What—that tethered hoss an' wagon over there? Workin', eh? But what's behind the bill-postin' job, Red; what's the graft?"

The man put out a heavy brogan and viciously kicked the ember back into the many-tongued exuberance of flame. He looked up at the boy, his small pig-like eyes tinged red by the firelight.

"Wot d'yuh mean, graft? Can't a bloke woik an' play it straight? Where'd yuh git thet stuff, Kid?"

"Oh, no harm meant, Red. I was jes' wonderin', old-timer. Kinder funny to see yer workin', that's all."

Frisco Red grunted sourly. He was quick to change the subject.

"Still got the dorg, I see, Kid," he said in his whisky voice, a leer far from affable upon his red-stubbled face.

"Yuh betcha," was the proud rejoinder. "We're some buddies, me and Gay-Cat. We've hoboed some since we left yer, Red."

"Hoboed?" snorted the man scoffingly.

He looked up at the boy with deep calculation in his piggy eyes.

"But yuh ain't never hoboed back to the walley, has yer, Kid; yuh ain't never gone back to yer ma, the leddy in the shawl, wot? I hear she's been a-waitin' fer yer ever sence thet day three year ago when yer joined out with thet circus."

The Frisco Kid did not answer. Musingly, with deep-sunk eyes, he stared into the fire.

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It was not often he thought of home; but this night the long explanation to Crybaby and now this meeting with his old hobo-master had filled his mind with memories. In the red leaping flames of the fire he could see the little cottage clearly.

It was sweet where he was born. Whenever he thought of it, it was the same—always as it had been in the morning when the air was crystal and the marguerites near the picket fence had no dust on their whiteness.

It was up in Grass Valley. Before the damp had got him his father had been a workman in the mines. His mother always gave setdowns to hoboes. Year after year she did that. All the hoboes knew the white-faced little woman.

"The lady in the shawl," they called her. Always she asked them, in return for her kindness, to look for her baby who was out there among all those lost boys and men.

For him every night she kept a lamp lighted—an oil lamp in the window. That was his room. A hundred road-kids had slept for a night within the pink-papered little cubby. They had told him.

But the Kid did not go back. He felt he never could go back. He knew that when the train shrilled high up on the side of the valley and the sounds dropped down, he would go as he had gone before. He never could stay on.

An urge was in him. That urge had drawn him out of the arms of his graying mother when he was twelve, and after a circus train that had dipped into the little valley to extract its tribute of quarters and the irretrievable tribute of boys. That miserable urge kept him moving—moving to find peace. It was the accursed *Wanderlust.*

A LOW whine rose from the Gay-Cat and the boy shivered out of his dream. Some change in Frisco Red had frightened the dog, for he had retreated behind the boy's legs.

The Kid looked at the tramp. The fellow was sitting up rigidly, his little eyes wide, a startled light in their red-tinged depths. Red was staring as if at something behind the Kid.

The Frisco Kid turned round. Another hobo had entered the jungle, was moving with sharp certitude of stride toward the oad-kids' fire. He also must have come in on that recent train. He was garbed with the calculated forethought of the true blown-in-the-glass—black overalls, neckerchief and cap. The cap this man wore was a large affair turned inside out, the yellow silk lining exposed.

He carried under one arm a roll of clothing, the "bindle," tied compactly with a bit of hay-rope. He was hardly a head taller than the Frisco Kid; he stood about five feet eight or nine; but the Kid, watching him from behind, noted the suppressed violence of hip-swagger and arm-swing that told of hidden strength, of vigorous and brisk nerves and muscles acting together in perfect coordination.

The Kid turned to Red with surprize. There was naught about this newcomer to cause alarm; he looked merely the sturdy blown-in-the-glass. Red, he found, had shifted his position. He sat with his back squared to the road-kids' fire, his body hunched forward and head sunk on chest. It was much as if he were striving to conceal himself from the view of the newcomer; at least, by thus huddling, to render recognition more difficult.

In a mixture of feelings, not the least of which was an inordinate curiosity, the Frisco Kid moved rapidly across the shadowy interval between the two camps. He noticed, as he drew near under the flame-burnished willow branches, that the faces of the boys had all gone blank and dismayed. The road-kids were huddled together, exchanging whispers in great seriousness and stealth. The Frisco Kid sat down beside Portugee.

CHAPTER III

STRONG-ARM

THE late-comer wasted no time in greeting the road-kids or the other three hoboes; nor did he stride directly to the kerosene can to help himself to the remainder of the stew. His brutal, unfinished-looking gash of mouth was set as with a grim purpose.

He cast the bundle of clothing upon the ground within the circle about the fire. Then rapidly, with strong stubby fingers, he began to unbutton the black overalls worn over trousers and coat.

He was a peculiar and rememberable-looking man. His face was not so swarthy as muddy-hued. His nose was short, the

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cheek-bones high, and his brows formed of very black, distinct hairs.

His eyes were remarkable. They were almond-shaped and of an odd cast of blue, an almost greenish-blue. It was startling, those green-blue eyes in that muddy, black-haired face. They were eyes instinctively to be distrusted. In their green-blue depths were profounds of weakness as well as power. They were the eyes of a religious fanatic, of the cold-blooded criminal for a Cause.

The Frisco Kid leaned close to whisper a question in Portugee's ear. The fellow, as he did, slipped off the overalls and kicked them viciously against the bundle of clothing. He unbuttoned and tore off his coat.

"A strong-armer!" breathed the Kid in a cold whisper of awe.

Beneath the man's left armpit, over the vest, was slung a shoulder-holster. There was a revolver in that holster. Its muzzle set deep and snugly into a round of leather; across the gleaming metal handle, holding it firmly in place, was snapped a springy whalebone. The revolver was high under the man's armpit. But one jerk with his right hand and that revolver would slip out from under the snapping whalebone.

"Sure, a strong-armer," returned Portugee in a cautious whisper. "Thet's the Black Finn, Strong-Arm hisself. I didn't expect him ter blow along, er me an' me push 'ud never 'a' jungled-up here. He's a bad *hombre*, Strong-Arm. He's a ole Ref boy, an' youse knows how hard an' wicious them Ref boys is."

Yes indeed, the Frisco Kid knew. In all his railroading he had met no more case-hardened, brutal and depraved specimens of humanity than those finished products of State reform schools, the old Ref boys. They are like men congenitally perverted to crime. During their most susceptible years confinement in reformatories causes them to be companions and comrades of older and more vicious boys.

Because most of the older boys have been in lesser jails sometime and because the discipline and restrictions of the schools are so similar to those of penitentiaries, it becomes a matter of pride for the boys to imitate convicts and seize greedily upon prison slang. In a refom school, as in a prison, all guards are "screws" and all clever criminals "good people." The world beyond is "the outside." The boys are forever aping the "real thing," the "one or two time losers," the "zebras in stir."

Small wonder then that when these perverted youths are sent forth into the world, knowing naught else but depravity, brutality and crime, they become the dread of older criminals as well as the police. Older criminals, who have not had the benefit of their institutional education, fear them and their wanton savagery and flee them on sight. The whole tramp world looks askance at each and any of them as at a dangerous lunatic abroad with a sharp knife.

"What's this Ref boy's special line?" whispered the Frisco Kid cynically. "Highway robbery or merely croakin' guys jes' fer fun?"

"Dunno fer a fac', Frisco, but of course Strong-Arm's got his own pertic'lar line. He's a gun-man, yer kin see; but he's kinder quieter and less wiciously murderous than most. I've heard him called various monakers—Strong-Arm, an' the Black Finn, an' even the Big Sab-Cat."

"What! A Wobbly?"

Portugee began a nod. His eyes glued to the thick-set man near the fire, however, he thought better of it.

"Sure," he whispered guardedly; "an I. W. W. I think he's a quick-limer er a bomber fer the Wobblies. I've noticed, whinever I've met up with him, thet most boes an' even other old Ref boys is scared stiff of him. He's no gun to monkey with; jist take thet from me, Frisco. Tell yer wot; I'm jist waitin' my chancet ter give the push the office, an' then we'll all pussy-foot it outer here without him noticin'. Yuh better beat it, too, Frisco."

The man had thrown his coat upon the bindle tied with hay-rope. He had opened his vest. He busied himself morosely, unbuckling a very new and gaudily stitched pair of suspenders. He tied the two long elastic plaits together so that the metal clasps bulged from the knot like knuckles from a fist. Then he took firm hold of the suspenders by the end farthest from the heavy knot. The suspenders were an impromptu instrument of punishment, an improvised but cruel knout.

"Wot's become of thet kid as used ter do Strong-Arm's beggin'?" asked Cigaret Jimmy in a stealthy undertone, as if struck with sudden thought at the man's ominous preparations.

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"Who—Chick? Dunno, Cig. Mebbe he run away."

Strong-Arm raised his head. He looked between the trees toward the outer confines of The Willows. A boy cowered there in the shadows. That boy was watching him with a fixed and poignant interest. He had watched him since he approached the road-kids' fire.

That boy never for a moment remained still. Flitting from tree-trunk to tree-trunk with an uncanny restlessness, standing on one leg at a time, rubbing the calf of the used leg with the toes of the other and forever nervously shifting legs, he watched the man with great peering eyes, stark as an animal's with fear.

"Yuh won't do it, Chick?"

There was in the calling voice a tone that showed the man had asked the question before. There was in that voice, also a certain note which showed he would not ask that question again.

The boy cringed beneath the voice as if beneath a blow. He turned as if to run and hide deeper in the shadows. Then, as if drawn and compelled by the question, he came slinking to the edge of the firelight, his legs dragging as if heavily weighted.

He was about ten years of age. His body was pitifully scant and scrawny. He wore only a thin, faded, red sweater and knee-trousers; and, although it was still April and the weather biting and wintry, he was unshod and bare-legged.

His was the face of a baby, small, inchoate of feature, the great childish eyes red-rimmed from much recent weeping. He might have been brother to Crybaby Kid, the two were so infantilely alike.

As with most children, he was not of a strongly pigmented order; he was straw-colored of hair and wan of complexion. Just now a path of pallor was upon each tear-streaked cheek like a coating of thick rice powder, and his eyes were enlarged and strained-looking with a sickening, abject fear.

"Aw, I can't, Strong-Arm!" he answered in a shaky, fluttering, thin voice. "Yer knows I'd love ter do ut, but I—I jes' can't. I'm too leary. Honest, Strong-Arm, I'd love ter; but I'm leary; I'm scared stiff!"

"Come here!" said Strong-Arm with saturnine finality.

He spread his legs and waited, the suspenders dangling from an idle hand.

Sundry significant whispers and glances had passed between the road-kids of Portugee's push. Without ado, with indeed a stealthy precaution, Crybaby Kid got to his feet and slid out of the huddled circle into darkness. A moment after another road-kid vanished.

It was like a game of niggerbaby. Still another road-kid tiptoed away, and then there were eight. The Swede Kid went next and then there were only seven.

One of the burly, bleak-faced hoboes noticed the Swede Kid soft-footing it out of camp. His eyes followed that slouching little figure as if he, too, should like to steal silently away. But he was more fearful than the kids to move. He was afraid of Strong-Arm taking sudden alarm or anger and maliciously using his gun.

Between Portugee and this bleak-faced blown-in-the-glass sat the Frisco Kid, the ragged-eared yellow mongrel between his knees. The Kid knew that the boy skulking on the edge of the firelight was about to be whipped unmercifully. Why that boy was to be whipped he did not know, nor did any one else save and excepting that man with the fanatical almond-shaped eyes, waiting there so quiet and saturnine. But that was all sufficient.

The branches of the willows soughed overhead. The acrid sharpness of the wood-smoke edged every gust of wind.

THE boy came slowly into the bland firelight. He walked stiffly; wooden, brittle of stride. Walking, with him, was arduous labor; he seemed about to fall at every step. He halted once and retreated in sudden panic.

One could see the terrific inward struggle on his quivering, white face. Instinct told him to run away; he wanted, dearly wanted, to run away; but reason and many past experiences told him that to run away would only add tenfold to the severity of the beating he eventually would receive. He came on at a snail's pace, his stiff legs dragging and clogging progress.

The man with the cold green eyes waited. He made no move.

The boy did not look at the man. His wide baby eyes were rigid in a terrible fascination upon those knotted suspenders dangling idly but portentously by the man's side.

Once his abject eyes fluttered up to the

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Russian eyes of the man. A low plaintive whimper escaped his pouting lips. He stood rooted, unable to inch on a step. He whimpered again and his leaden-hued baby face worked and contorted with the agonized endeavor to struggle nearer those knotted suspenders. He came on at last obliquely, circling forward like a cringing dog.

He halted within striking distance of the suspenders. The man raised his arm; the boy cringed lower in affrighted anticipation of the blow; the knotted suspenders whistled through the air.

The Frisco Kid flinched himself at the weight of the blow. The knot on the suspenders weighed them down and caused them to curl tightly round the boy's bare legs. The boy shook with pain in every fiber of him. He squealed aloud.

The elastic in the gaudy strands stretched with the weight of the knot, then contracted quickly as the strands curled round the boy's legs. When the suspenders lifted again in the air, the flesh showed white where the suspenders had curled, then red where the elastic in contracting had torn away the skin.

Again the suspenders zipped through the air; again the savage red welt sprang up on the boy's thin legs. Five times. Then the boy began to dance about in his agony and scream shrilly in that thinness of voice common to the very young.

The Frisco Kid clutched the dog to him. The little mongrel was trembling; he himself was breathing hard. He knew what that screaming, dancing boy was suffering. Had he not been beaten, often and inhumanly, by Frisco Red when slave to that brutal hobo?

He looked, in a kind of plea, at the Portugee Kid beside him and at Cigaret Jimmy just beyond. They were all that were left of the push. Portugee's swarthy face was stiff with poorly restrained emotion, his amber Iberian eyes dark with anger and an excess of fear. There was a dangerous curve to Cigaret Jimmy's thin lips. He was raging inside and growing more recklessly furious each moment.

As the Frisco Kid noted his working lips, he saw Portugee reach over and tap his hand. Portugee nodded jerkily toward the darkness beyond the fire. In implicit obedience Jimmy rose to his feet and slid out of the firelight. But he paused once to look back over his shoulder at the vicious Ref boy and to place a daring and contumelious set of fingers to his nose.

The Kid's eyes sought, in further plea, the full-grown hoboes about him. The bleak-faced fellow alongside, who had followed the Swede Kid's departure with fearful longing, was rolling a cigaret as if to keep sight of the beating from his eyes, as if indeed pondering deep thoughts. Another was looking on with a dull, almost bovine interest, as if for lack of something better to watch. The third, however, was evincing a real and visible pleasure in the sight.

His wide-spaced eyes were pretty bright, and he was nodding his head at each cruel blow to lend encouragement to Strong-Arm—as if, to tell truth, that old Ref boy needed any one to egg him on in his brutality! Perhaps the fellow hoped thus to curry favor with the strong-armer.

The Kid knew. The hoboes stood in mortal dread of the Black Finn. Not one of them would interpose to save the boy. He knew he could do naught himself to interfere. Those three blown-in-the-glass about him would not allow him to interfere.

The boy, Chick, belonged to the man who was beating him. He was Strong-Arm's road-kid, his prushun. It was the Law of the Road that the man should beat him whenever he so minded, however cruelly he desired, and that no one should step in between.

Besides and above all, the brute who was administering the whipping in this case was a notorious and vicious strong-armer. Plain to see, under his left arm, was that revolver in its shoulder-holster. The hoboes about the Frisco Kid were afraid of that man, and especially of his gun. In fear for themselves they would not suffer the Frisco Kid to interfere.

Suppose they were to allow the Kid to interfere, what could he do? Strong-Arm was little bigger than the Frisco Kid, true; but Strong-Arm had a gun. The Frisco Kid knew his type. He would use that weapon at the first show of interference from any one of them. The chances were, if the Kid interposed at all, he would slug him over the head with the gun, then return with redoubled vigor to the beating of the boy.

The boy was screaming continually. He was dancing about, leaving thick dark

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spots on the ground where his feet touched. But the man did not follow him around, nor even attempt to curb his backward leaping, to herd him with blows.

The man stood still. When the boy danced out of range, he lifted the suspenders and waited until the boy danced, screaming, back into striking distance.

Once Chick did not dance back quickly enough. The suspenders lashed his tiny face. A streak of white showed full across small nose and cheeks, to change rapidly into a red line of swelling where blood oozed in many pinheads.

CHAPTER IV

THE JOB

SHOCKED out of all caution by the fiendish barbarity of that blow on the face, the Frisco Kid made at that to rise. But the bleak-faced fellow alongside him, who had finished rolling the cigaret, shoved him down, a hand on his arm.

The hobo said no word, but he used more strength than the occasion demanded to shove him down. He used that strength to instil into the Kid's mind a sense of fear of himself. He was prepared to back up Strong-Arm. It was dog eat dog. He was afraid of Strong-Arm and his gun and, to protect and safeguard himself, he would attack the Frisco Kid.

Portugee looked at the Kid, his amber eyes blank with a vast and utter surprize. All at once his swarth face broke out into a thick sweat. It was as if he were shocked and altogether shaken by the Frisco Kid's foolhardiness. He turned over abruptly and, on hands and knees, went creeping stealthily away into the darkness.

Chick's frail, quivering legs were pulsing blood from the red welts that stood out like so many malignant boils. Strong-Arm suddenly paused in his inhuman pursuit, the suspenders upraised menacingly.

"Yuh'll do it now, Chick," he insisted.

The boy did not look at the man. He danced from one foot to the other and his screams broke into soft, choked squeals of agony. He could not speak. But he nodded his tiny straw-colored head.

Strong-Arm threw the discolored suspenders upon the ground. He reached over and picked up the bundle of clothing.

"Yuh know what's wanted," he said through the unmoving gash of mouth.

He handed the squealing boy the rope-bound bindle.

"Git there before the twenty-fifth. Slope!"

The boy started off among the trees. As he limped away, he whimpered like a whipped dog.

Strong-Arm wiped the sweat from the back of his neck and from his brow. He felt in the right hand and seemingly unconsciously, for the shoulder-holster under his left arm. Then he looked round at the three hoboes and at the sole remaining road-kid, a challenge in his almond-shaped, cold green eyes. No one said a word nor made a move. Only the Frisco Kid held tightly to his trembling dog.

"Gimme a smoke," he demanded.

He approached with sharp certitude of stride the hobo alongside the Frisco Kid who was proffering the sheaf of papers and small muslin sack of tobacco. But he did not take the makings. There was an uncontrollable gulping behind him. He slewed round, one hand under his left armpit, his almond eyes suddenly narrowed into semicircular slits. The boy, Chick, stood there on quaking legs, the bindle of clothing under one arm.

"Oh, Strong-Arm, I—I can't; I can't," he gulped. "I—I'm scared!"

The red welt across tiny nose and cheeks showed with startling vividness the ghastly pallor of the little face. He looked up at the man, a hideous terror stretching his baby eyes—the distracted terror of an indescribably driven child.

Strong-Arm said no word, but his almond eyes widened with cold malignant light and his brutal, unfinished-looking gash of mouth curved into a frightful snarl. He reached down for the suspenders upon the ground. Once more he curled those suspenders round the blood-streaked, frail and quivering legs of the screaming boy.

The Frisco Kid made an inarticulate sound in his throat. He could not help it. Here was cruelty cutting into cruelty's wounds!

The discolored suspenders dropped from Strong-Arm's hand as if afire. He whirled round. His right hand was again under his armpit, his eyes once more narrowed into semicircular slits.

"Who's coughin' now?" he vociferated through the snarling gash of mouth that never moved.

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"It was the dorg, Strong-Arm," spoke up the bleak-faced fellow who had offered him makings.

"Dorg?" repeated the old Ref boy incredulously, the snarl to his mouth deepening. "Dorg nothin'. Ef any o' youse bums think yuh wanter jump in here, step up. Come on. I'll give yuh the kid's beatin' then some."

The challenge, pregnant with vicious threat though it was, sprung the Frisco Kid to his feet. Ere any of the hoboes could stop him, even if they had the courage with Strong-Arm looking on, he was on his feet and making with grim defiance toward the Kid man. He hardly knew what he was saying.

"Lay off that kid, Strong-Arm. I can't stand to see him beaten up that way. I've seen too much of it. *I'll* take his beatin'."

Again Strong-Arm said no word. He stooped and picked up the discolored suspenders. The snarl to his mouth was set as if done in granite; there was cruel calculation in the curving slits of eyes. He swung the suspenders, and the metal knot caught the Frisco Kid full on the face. The dog rushed forward, snarling in turn, hair bristling, fangs bared savagely. He kicked the Gay-Cat into a yellow bundle that sailed, whimpering, through the air.

THE boy, Chick, for whose sake the Frisco Kid had interfered, looked on at the beating, his puny harassed body shaking with unrestrainable sobs. There was in his red-rimmed eyes such an empty blankness that it was as if the blow across the tiny white face had shocked the nerves of those baby eyes out of all power of expression.

The truth was, his eyes were wide with dumb astonishment, blank with an inconceivable and incredulous wonder. He could not understand why the Frisco Kid had interposed; why any one, in fact, should interfere. He never had expected it.

In the few years he had been on the road, never had the like happened before. He could not believe it true and real until he saw the malignant bruise on the Kid's face where the metal knot had struck and wounded.

The Frisco Kid bent his head between lean shoulders and huddled there under the lashing. He uttered no scream; he did not even dance; but his shoulders burned where the suspenders furrowed his back, and his trousers clung damply to the calves of his legs. He cringed, bit his lower lip, clenched dirty hands and sweated in grim martyrdom.

The suspenders lifted and bit, lifted and bit with a monotonous and cruel persistency. The wide nostrils of Strong-Arm's short nose fluttered visibly in and out with the exertion. At last Strong-Arm tired.

"Had enough?" he snarled.

"Naw," returned the Kid, giving meanness for meanness. "I kin stand it as long as you can."

A momentary flicker of stinted admiration fired the man's narrow eyes like the gleam of steel striking steel. He lifted the suspenders. He'd give this boy all he wanted! But bravado was yeasting strongly in the Kid.

"What yer so horstile about anyway?" he challenged. "What yer want yer kid to do? I ain't a-scared of yer dirty work."

The suspenders dropped to the man's side; his eyes widened and his heavy jaw slackened in a real and sharp surprize.

"Wot!" he exclaimed, and for the first time his uncouth lips moved with the sound. "Yuh'll do the kid's job?"

He eyed the boy with cold, green calculating eyes—eyed him up and down as if judging and weighing his fitness for the task at hand.

"You hearn me, didn't yer?"

There was no warning other than a sharp noise, like the sound of a twig crackling in the fire or the sudden snap of a springy whalebone. The old Ref boy slewed round on the three blown-in-the-glass about the fire. There gleamed in his right hand, as he did, the metal of a revolver. He menaced the hoboes with the weapon. His voice exploded in command—

"Slope, yuh gay-cats!"

Hastily but spinelessly the three got to their feet. Said he who had gloated over the beatings, plaintively:

"But we-uns ain't no gay-cats, Strong-Arm. We'se blowed-in-the-glass."

"Blowed-in-the-glass?" echoed Strong-Arm, a withering scorn in his voice. "Why, there ain't one o' youse has the spine of a fish. It took this road-kid here ter show yuh all up. Blowed-in-the-glass, nothin'! From now on ye're gay-cats, an' youse calls yerselves gay-cats, see? Now, slope!"

The three hoboes shuffled out of the firelight, up the railroad embankment and

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southward into the gusty night. Strong-Arm watched them go. He wheeled slowly round and, looking between the willow trunks under the flame-burnished foliage, scanned carefully the whole jungle.

The Kid, following his eyes, noted all at once that there where the embers showed the former fire of Frisco Red, there was no longer a covered wagon and tethered horse near by nor any sign of the two poster men. With a quietness come of fear, the two had harnessed the horse to the wagon and driven away. They had been frightened off by the appearance in the jungle of Strong-Arm.

"Here," said that dread personage to the Frisco Kid, sure they were alone, his greenish-blue eyes blazing strangely. "Take thet bindle 'o clothes from me prushun, Chick. Today's the twentieth. Drill through Illinois an' up to Joliet afore the twenty-fifth. No stallin', kid; git there by the mornin' o' the twenty-fifth an' be darn sure yuh do!

"Give the bindle to the furnace trusty o' the warden's mansion. The mansion is jist outside the stir. It looks like the commandin' officer's shack in a military reservation—all flower-beds an' shell-walks.

"Yuh'll find the furnace trusty down in the basemint, tendin' the fires. Jist give him the bindle o' ole clothes; he'll know wot's wot. Youse got yer orders. Now slope!"

The Frisco Kid went to the boy and took the bundle of clothing from his hands. The boy rubbed his blank baby eyes; he seemed altogether stupefied by the turn of events. The Frisco Kid was really going to perform the job he so feared! He watched the Kid, a great admiration in his thunderstruck eyes.

The Frisco Kid came back to the waiting man, the rope-bound bundle under his arm. He looked steadily up at the malign eyes.

"Thet furnace trusty must be a pretty thick friend of yourn."

"Wot's it to yuh!" snarled Strong-Arm.

He added rancorously:

"Wot matters to youse is ter git this job done, an' done right. By the twenty-fifth, remember, either deliver the goods er take the consekences. Yer asked yerself in on this deal so ef youse tries any phony play er falls down on the job, yuh'll hear from me. I knows youse, Frisco Kid, an' I'll look yuh up ef yuh acts anyways funny. Besides, I ain't the on'y gun interested in this little stunt. Now last an' final orders—slope, an' slope sudden!"

The Frisco Kid called to the dog slinking round the other side of the fire—

"Here, Gay-Cat!"

Then, the dog at his heels, the bundle of clothing under one arm, he went through the trees, up the railroad embankment and northward along the rock-ballasted ties toward Joliet. Behind him, in The Willows, Strong-Arm and his prushun, Chick, were along in possession of the hangout.

CHAPTER V

JOHNNY TINPLATE

IT WAS mid-afternoon of the following day. The April prospect was chill and gray beneath vague curtains of falling rain. Since that gusty black nocturnal hour in The Willows, when Strong-Arm had beaten so cruelly the boy Chick, the rain had been threatening. It thrummed down now with a brooding, cosmic patience.

There was a brown, dreary road going somewhere through black, empty, rolling fields. As he walked the road the Frisco Kid's worn shoes squashed with sucking noises and spouted tiny jets at each down-put of his feet.

The boy no longer carried under one arm the bindle of clothing bound with hay-rope. Instead he wore two of everything—two coats, two vests, two pairs of trousers, each kind of garment superimposed over the other. One pocket of the outside coat bulged where within he had stuffed a green cap.

That the Frisco Kid should bethink himself of the device of wearing both his own suit and the suit he must bring to the furnace trusty at Joliet was no stroke of original genius. The stunt of wearing two of everything is an old hobo trick, a traditional favorite with the confraternity of blown-in-the-glass stiffs. Besides, the day was sleetily chill.

The little cur, Gay-Cat, was as wet and wobegone as the boy. He streamed water from each wire-like spike of dirt-pasted yellow hair. At times the dog dropped wearily behind the boy; at other times he drew a little ahead to point up a quivering nose to the boy and worriedly question him with patient, loving eyes. At one of these times the Kid said:

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"Don't take on so over a little rain, Gay-Cat, old hobo; jes' keep a-drillin' a coupla miles more. I didn't think it 'ud take us so long—most of last night an' all of terday; Portugee said it were on'y a coupla dozen miles on. But everything will be jake oncet we hit this burg I'm tellin' yer about. It's sure to be the nex' burg, Gay-Cat, an' its monaker's Middletown.

"And we won't have to throw our feet all over that burg in the rain. No, siree, bo; we won't even have to toot a ringer or batter a back door. 'Cause that's where Mis' Heffernan lives, Gay-Cat, old-timer!"

A whitewashed barn bulked up through the vagueness of rain to one side. The Frisco Kid halted and gave vent to a little whistle of surprize. There was a vividly colored circus poster on the whitewashed boards. It was the depiction of a family of aerial gymnasts, the men in green tights, the women in pink, some hanging by their knees from high trapezia, others leaping from hand to hand through the air. Over the top of it was labeled in crimson letters:

THE SEVEN SCOBOLOFFS
Poland's Premier Aces of the Air

Beneath the lithograph on a wide strip of paper appeared:

Bigley's Mammoth Wild Animal Show, Two-Ringed Circus and Congregation of Twentieth Century Wonders
Middletown, Friday, April 22

The circus poster, the Kid noticed, was brilliant and glossy with newness. The rain had not yet torn off hanging segments and Irish pennants. It could not have been pasted in place many hours previous to the downpour.

"Frisco Red!" ejaculated the Kid. "That stiff headed straight this way as soon as he wiggled outer sight of Strong-Arm's gat. An' he's beatin' our time, Gay-Cat. I'll jes' bet he hit it up along the road in that bill-postin' wagon for all his old hoss was worth while we was countin' them ties."

The boy stood in the streaming grayness, one thin-wristed hand holding the turned-up collar of the outer coat tightly about his reed-like neck.

"But I wonder why Red's in sech a rush to git on. I never knowed him to be so chipper for work afore. Of course, that circus will be here tomorror; but I wonder has he some business in Middletown, some graft what he's pullin' under cover of that bill-postin'."

The downpour boomed a melancholy accompaniment to the Kid's sudden and suspicious train of thought. He was starting on, picking careful way between rain-lashed puddles that brimmed the ruts of the road when on the sudden he was hailed from a window in the whitewashed face of the barn—

"Come back here, young feller."

The oddly official tone of the command disquieted the Frisco Kid. He saw the huge door of the barn slide open and two men appear. They were adjusting upon their heads as they stumbled forth gunny-sacks that had been flattened out and then knocked into pointed hoods. It was a protection from the rain for both head and back.

Often the Kid had seen country-folk wearing sack cowls and often had he availed himself in wet weather of similar protection. But of these two men only one was palpably a countryman. He was a hulking fellow in blue jeans and heavy brogans. He carried a shotgun.

The other man, who walked first and who hailed the Kid, was garbed in a conflicting assortment of garments. He wore brown leather puttees and khaki Army trousers like an equestrian or motorcyclist, and faded cutaway coat, hard-boiled collar and black string tie like a Southern colonel. He clutched in one hand a vicious-looking, sizable automatic. Upon the coat sleeve of that right hand, at the wrist, was a large nickel-plated star which threw dim flashes in the rain like a broken piece of mirror.

"The sheriff hisself!"

The Kid's lips fluttered dryly and his spine tingled with unreasoned fright. He swung round to flee. It was a reflex impulse altogether mechanical. Subconsciously motivated, almost instinctively, he felt the desire to run.

The Frisco Kid was a hobo, an outcast. He had learned, through many harsh contacts and disillusioning bitter experiences, to put small faith in the law and justice of that world from which, as a hobo, he was cast out. The appearance of the law in a physical guise was to him like the crack of the starter's pistol in a race. It was the signal for him to take to his heels, to get quickly hence.

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THE man with the star saw the boy turn. He sensed the subconscious process. He grinned appreciatively through drooping-tailed mustaches.

"No you don't!" he barked. "No use trying to beat it, bo. I've got you dead to rights; and besides the roads are all patrolled up yonder where you were heading."

He raised the snub-nosed automatic.

The Frisco Kid froze in his tracks, standing stiffly upright and paralytically still. He watched the sheriff and the deputy saunter up with eyes that were alone alive in a blanched, bruised face—eyes that were shifty and wary as a frightened animal's.

"A hobo kid!" ejaculated the sheriff, turning to his deputy in surprize. "Why, I thought it was some little runt of an old-timer trying to run out on me."

His eyes came back to the boy and he reached over and, with the snub-nosed barrel of the automatic, lifted aside the flap of one coat.

"Traveling rather heavy, aren't you, kid?" he asked with sudden suspicion. "Not thinking of meeting up with any one along the road, are you, and swapping a suit?"

There was swift guilt in the boy's deep sunk eyes. But he answered stoutly:

"Naw; this is me Winter outfit. I ain't changed yet; not till I git south."

"Well, that's the way you're going to head," returned the sheriff significantly.

He looked round at his countrified deputy.

"What do you think of him, Josh? Shall we turn him back the way he came, or slap him as a suspicious character in the Middletown hoosegow for safe-keeping? You see, he's wearing two suits, and he's heading north. That looks queer to me. Say, I have a great mind to vag him. Maybe he's not so innocent as he seems at first look."

The deputy shook his gunny-sack-hooded head vigorously.

"Aw, wot ef he has two suits, sheriff! It's cold enough, I'm here to tell yuh. Walkin' in the rain, he sorter needs two suits anyways. Besides, he can't git fu'ther no'th than Middletown, account of all them citizens guardin' the roads. Jest bundle him back the way he came. He's only a kid, Sheriff Kummer, an' can't be put up to no power of harm. Jest head him so'th, says I."

The sheriff turned to the Frisco Kid without any trace of discomfiture at having his suspicious theories gainsaid.

"You heard, kid? Well, those are your orders. Beat it back south. Upper Illinois is dangerous for your kind. It's the back track for you, boy. Now drill along."

Slumped into the typical hobo slouch, the Frisco Kid retraced his steps. The two sack-cowled ones watched him through the misty curtains of rain until he was far down the road.

Then the Kid reached a point where another road swung in. He turned promptly on his heel and pursued this other fork north again. From the moment he had received his orders he had had no intention of keeping south. He had a job to do and a certain time limit in which to do it.

He had lost perhaps three good hours by meeting with the Johnny Tinplate. It was now coming on evening and a dull wintry dusk. The black, empty rolling fields continued on either hand, and the road was of a fellowship in dreariness with the first he had walked.

The rolled-up bottoms of the double thickness of trousers dragged mud at his heels with every step. The two coats, heavy with soaking, slapped their moist tails against his knees, and wearied and smarted his shoulders, raw from the lashing of the previous night.

The dog dragged wearily behind him as if at the end of an invisible thong. All about, the vague curtains of rain draped the world, and dimmed and toned everything to a chill, dreary gray.

A dog commenced barking ringingly on a remote rise of hill. The sharp clamor, breathing from afar over black, empty fields, was as the voice of inhospitality, speaking of dog-guarded kitchen doors. The Gay-Cat halted in his tracks and gave back instant defiance.

"Ssh!" warned the Kid, struck with swift fear. "Do yer wanter start somethin', Gay-Cat? That old Johnny Tinplate said as how he had men with dogs an' guns all along these roads. Better put the muffler on, old-timer."

Answered from the rise of hill a whole chorus of harsh and challenging dog voices. There were commingled the shrill yelping of terriers and the hoarse baying of some sort of hound. Somberly the throaty

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explosions rose and fell and then rose again in the intolerable cosmic persistence of the downpour. Browbeaten and heedful at last of the Kid's warning, the Gay-Cat put wet tail between legs, and cringed and was silent as the two drew wearily onward.

Uncontested by any sound from the cowed Gay-Cat, the barking pulsed dejectedly away. Boy and dog topped the rise of hill. Before them, down the slope, they saw a scattering of red-roofed houses and whitewashed outbuildings squatting low to earth beneath the streaming curtains of rain.

From somewhere far off they could hear a kitchen screen-door banging and banging. Behind certain windows the first lights of evening were blinking up, one by one. Otherwise there was no show of life in the little community of Middletown.

To their left and very close at hand the dogs commenced chorusing again. There was a whitewashed hoarding paralleling the road. From behind, the uproar of barking seemed to explode.

They followed the line of fence. As they did, the boarding shook and sagged and resounded with the impact of leaping dogs, as if behind that fence dogs padded along with them, an unseen but tumultuous escort. They came to a graveled driveway above which hung a signboard, the golden letters of which shimmered faintly in the gloom:

MIDDLETOWN POLICE-DOG AND AIREDALE KENNELS

Rose Lydia Heffernan, Prop.

The Frisco Kid studied the sign.

"Here's the place where our meal-ticket lives, Gay-Cat, old-timer."

He proceeded down the driveway which was palisaded by yew that was black as ink in the thickening dark. Through the great rents in the disheveled hedges he could make out a succession of wire-meshed fences walling in a row of sheds at either hand. In those sheds many vague, agile shapes moved restlessly and barked.

At the end of the yew alley was a dimly white building with peaked roof and many tall, lean windows barred by heavy shutters. The house did not look like an old family mansion. What with its sequestration from the road and semicircle of former carriage sheds it had the appearance of an obscure road-house long run to seed.

There was a deep-alcoved entry and an old-fashioned pull bell. Far within the depths of the house the bell jangled remotely at the Kid's behest.

There was a long pause. The Frisco Kid and the Gay-Cat stood shivering with damp and cold, and nervously harkened.

The door opened in their face. Said a small feminine voice from the darkness of the hallway—

"You're not Jerrold, are you, naow?"

There was strangely wistful inquiry in that thin, taut voice from out the gloom. The Kid stepped back to the brink of the stairs, his spine tingling with unreasoned fright, his whole being quiveringly disquieted. The moment was suddenly dynamic.

The Kid wet his lips and strove to answer. He wanted to say that he wasn't the Jerrold she seemed to be expecting; he was just a road-kid, only the Frisco Kid and his dog, Gay-Cat. But the grip of the unexpected and unexplained was upon him, and he could not speak.

CHAPTER VI

A SETDOWN AT MISS HEFFERNAN'S

"LAWS, no; you're sartainly not Jerrold," broke out the small voice more freely. "I see that plain naow. You're too little."

The Kid, his eyes become accustomed to the dark, could make her out in the gloom of the hallway. She was a little old lady, her scanty white hair smoothed primly back from her forehead and tied in a compact knot. He glimpsed gold-rimmed spectacles and had the impression of rather bitter and challenging eyes studying him sharply through the coldly gleaming lenses.

The Frisco Kid was an expert moocher. There never was a better hand at battering a back door and begging a handout. But he was wet to the skin, chilled to the marrow with cold, hungry and very tired. He was in no condition to give a song and dance—that is, a good begging story. He tried, but all he could say was:

"No, m'am. I ain't Jerrold. No, m'm."

The truth was he was too taken aback. Her greeting had nonplused him; and now her appearance—those bitter and suspicious eyes behind gold-rimmed glasses—filled him with the heart-sick feeling that he had

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come to the right door but the wrong person.

This was not the Miss Heffernan he had pictured to himself. Her mouth was pursed in an uncompromising button; she looked the tart schoolmarm type; certainly not the Miss Heffernan so good to hoboes. He hugged the soaked coats more tightly about him and began to shiver anew in formless but bitter disappointment. The Gay-Cat retreated behind his legs with a low, miserable whine.

But, as if she had not heard him, the woman went on:

"Little? Why you're only a road youngster. My, but you're drenched. And that little mongrel too, just a-dripping water. Land sakes, child! How did you ever get yourself so wringing wet? Come in, come in! You'll be catching your death of cold."

She spoke rapidly in a sharp, high-pitched, petulant voice. But the Frisco Kid and the Gay-Cat did not mind that. Behind those gold-rimmed glasses an odd, soft brightness had appeared in the bitter eyes. It was wonderful. That light in her eyes softened and made strangely tender the thin, faded, austere face. Forgotten was the severity of her tight-bound hair and pursed mouth; she seemed altogether a new Miss Heffernan.

The dog ceased whimpering. To the Kid it was as if somewhere doors had opened to expose a warm fire blazing upon a cheery hearth. And—strange—it was as if his own graying little mother stood upon the threshold, wrapped in her shawl and beckoning him within.

"Don't stand there, a-gawping at me and shivering your little jawbones off. Come in, come in," repeated Miss Heffernan hastily. "But do be careful of tracking your muddy shoes over my nice hall carpet that I swept myself this very day. Oh, dear! And I raiken that silly little dog of yours will be messing things generally, too.

"Couldn't you 'a' thought to tote yourself and that little animule around to the kitchen door in the rear? Most trampers that have been here before and all my little road youngsters come that way. Laws-a-mercy, child, but you're soaking wet. Let's hurry up-stairs and get you skinned out of those damp things."

She took complete possession of the two at once. Ere the Kid could fairly grasp the meaning of all that had occurred he had been personally conducted up the hall staircase to the second story and thence up a narrower staircase into a room. Miss Heffernan lighted the kerosene lamp on the bureau. He saw he was standing near a neat green-painted iron bed in a rag-carpeted room up under the sloping eaves.

Here, from a maple bureau, clean, dry woolen underwear was laid out for him by the quick-moving Miss Heffernan, who talked and talked at a furious rate. From a closet were produced a pair of knee-breeches, a Norfolk jacket and a little shirt-waist such as small boys wear. Also, a crimson neckerchief.

The Kid wondered vaguely at all the preparations. Said Miss Heffernan handing him two crash towels of generous size:

"Here, dry yourself thoroughly with one of these after you've skinned out of all those wet and dirty garments. My lands, but you're dressed heavy. What on earth are you doing with all those clothes on your little body, child?"

"This is me Winter outfit, Miss Heffernan," lied the Kid shamelessly. "It's purty cold out on the road, nights."

"Well, well; so it is indeed, pore child. Naow here's the other towel for to rub off that little drowned rat of a dog of your'n. I've heard of your dog from ragged youngsters like yourself who've come to me from time to time.

"Oh, the boys that come and go!" she exclaimed pensively. "Often I think how their pore mothers must be praying for them, and they out tramping the lonely roads."

IT WAS uncanny, the vision that flashed before the eyes of the Kid as Miss Heffernan sighed. The flame of the kerosene lamp seemed to go out; the rag-carpeted cubby with its maple bureau and green-stilted bed vanished as into darkness. There rose before his eyes a bush of white marguerites, clean of dust and sparkling with dew.

Behind it shaped the cottage, and on the doorsill a pale, little, shawled woman. He could see the dimmed plaid of the shawl about her thin shoulders. Her pale face was so near and distinct that he could see the blackness of her once brown eyes.

She looked over the marguerites along the road. She stretched out her arms to him, white arms, pitiably thin. Then she faded

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from sight. The white marguerites faded. Miss Heffernan was speaking:

"But your dog's quite a renowned character, isn't he? What's his name naow?"

"Gay-Cat, ma'am," gulped the Kid, turning his head away a trifle to knuckle secretly one deep-sunk eye.

"The Gay-Cat; that's it. Well, you will both feel much better when you are dry and cozy from the skin out. These clothes of Jerrold's may be ruther smallish for you, but——"

"Yer expectin' him tonight?"

The woman looked at him oddly. She seemed suddenly and profoundly alarmed. It was as if he had surprized her in some close-guarded secret.

There was a panicky moment of guilty flushes and fluttering hands. Then her mouth pursed up and she regarded him sharply through the gold-rimmed glasses. Once again was she the challenging schoolmarm type.

"Who?" she snapped.

"Aw, I didn't mean no harm, Miss Heffernan; honest, I didn't. I jes' thought mebbe yer was expectin' Jerrold ternight, that's all."

She seemed somehow relieved.

"Yes, I was," she admitted.

She nodded reminiscently and her challenging eyes flooded once again with that wonderful motherly softness.

"Every night I'm expecting him, but the years go and he never seems to come. He was only a youngster when he went away; yes, just a wee bit smaller than you be—my pore dead sister, Corra May's only child. Maybe I was hard on him; but Heavens knows it was for his own good. There's nothing like schooling nowadays, child. But run off with a circus when he was only fo'teen, he did, ruther than go to school, and I've been waiting and waiting ever sence."

The Frisco Kid nodded. He understood. Had it not been that way with himself, and was not his own little mother waiting for him up in Grass Valley and, with the wait, slowly graying in her shawl?

He saw clearly that here was why Miss Heffernan was so good to road-kids. In every child of the road that came to her she saw Jerrold as he was when he ran away. She was waiting for Jerrold to come back to her. She was waiting and hoping as the Frisco Kid's own pale little mother had been waiting, for three long years, in the cottage up in Grass Valley where the marguerites were always fresh and white.

"Oh, I clean forget to get you dry stockings. And naow you'll come down as soon as you're ready, won't you, youngster? My old mammy cook, Selina, has been tuck with the grippe and has gone into town to her darter's house for a spell, so you will have to eat in the kitchen, it's so late naow. But there will be plenty to eat, never fear. There is another tramper down there, and I have dinner already on the table."

"Who's him—this other bo?"

"Oh, just a man off the road that is walking to Chicago to get work there, pore fellow. And naow do hurry, child, or all the juices will be cooked out of the food I shall save in the oven for you."

As in her hurried yet prim way she swished out of the room, the Kid went over to the dry clothing laid out on the bed for his use. Curiously he examined the various articles of apparel: the Norfolk jacket, the kneebreeches, the childish blouse, the crimson neckerchief. Panic seized him. As he fingered each garment with dirty, hesitating paws, he muttered:

"Aw, say! What's eatin' her anyway? Aw, say now!"

What flattened him most were the kneebreeches. The Lord Fauntleroy blouse and neckerchief were bad enough; but kneebreeches on the Frisco Kid, a blown-in-the glass, a comet and a hobo royal! Better to eat wind pudding that night and pound his ear against the hard turf behind a billboard out in the wind and the rain!

He fished, from a bandanna-wrapped parcel of valuable odds and ends in an almost dry pocket, the sheaf of wheatstraws and little muslin sack of tobacco. A cigaret was most necessary to the moment. He drew long breaths of the fragrant smoke into his lungs and exhaled them pensively. The rain thrummed monotonously upon the wooden roof overhead and streamed down the window-panes.

Gradually he assumed a more philosophic viewpoint toward the trials and tribulations of a road-kid's life.

After all, who would see him in the Clarence fancy-dress but Miss Heffernan and that other bo? That other bo was, to judge from Miss Heffernan, only a shiftless no account who worked and hence dared never poke his low-caste nose into the hangouts

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and jungles where congregated the real aristocracy of hobodom, the blown-in-the-bottle stiffs to which order the Frisco Kid belonged and whose good opinion he cared not to lose. They take the word of such a gay-cat against the stout denial of the Frisco Kid?—any time! Besides, the other suits would be dry in the morning and he could change ere taking leave.

Ten minutes later slowly and hesitatingly he descended the narrow staircase from the attic room. The Gay-Cat, foolishly skittish after the rub-down, went with him. But the Kid did not feel skittish. He was too uncomfortable and abashed in the tight-fitting Fauntleroys of Jerrold.

However, as he went down the dark, spacious hall of the former road-house, certain subtle aromas of well-cooked food wafted pleasantly to his nostrils and made him forget a bit of his mortification. Sniffing deeply, his empty stomach beset by quickened sharp pangs, his nose drew him steadily on toward a door that stood slightly ajar.

As he put hand on knob, there assailed his ears the hoarse tone of a man. Either throat trouble or a liking for strong whisky had thickened and coarsened the man's bass into what has come to be termed a whisky voice. To the Frisco Kid those gruff tones were unmistakable. It was the voice of his old hobo-master, Frisco Red.

CHAPTER VII

FRISCO RED SHAKES HANDS

THE Frisco Kid paused, hand on knob, and gave ear. Within, in the sulfurous brightness of the lamplighted kitchen, Red was saying:

"I calls yer leddy friend a real calkylatin' an' cute kinder dame—parding the woids, ma'am, but I'm a rough sort, bein' left a orphing werry young an' not given no school in' pertic'lar. But thet leddy friend o' yourn is sure wise not ter trust no banks. Banks ain't safe nohow. Oncet I knowed a expert shoplifter name o' Detroit Mamie thet was Mis' Johnny Hep, like thet. She didn't trust no bank safes none, havin' been pals with too many good petermen. No safe kin stand against them electric drills an' the more gineral use o' high explosives nowadays. Money is better tuh home."

There was the rattle of a pot being placed upon the stove.

"That's the very way this friend of mine raikened," spoke up the sharp voice of Miss Heffernan. "She noticed that every time a circus came to town some bank was robbed. " 'My goodness,' she thought, 'sech a state of affairs can't last.'

"Fust thing she knew the banks would all be bankrupted by these robberies, and what little she had would be lost."

"It's me wot knows them circuses, Miss Heffernan, mum. Take this one wot will be here termorrer. There's allus travelin' with them backwoods wagon-shows a lot o' cheap crooks an' some real dyed-in-the-wool criminals. They goes with them shows inter little hick towns an' breaks inter the keester o' the bank safes an' gits away with all the stored-up jack of all them reubens round about."

"But what I can not understand, I declare, Mr. Red, is why these bad men are not captured by the perlice."

"Oh, thet's easy, ma'am. Yer see, these mobs o' crooks is four er five strong. They would be spotted first thing ef they tried ter move round the country on their lonely. Youse knows how one stranger in a hick town makes all kinds of excitemint on Main Street o' a week-day arternoon? So they travels under cover o' the circus. In all thet crowd with a circus, who's gonna spot three er four safe-crackers wot is woikin' as razor-backs er ticket-butchers er the like? A coz, the job's on'y a blind."

"I raiken I understand what you mean. But still it seems to me, Mr. Red, that the constable should be able to detect and capture them in the very act."

"Thet's true, very true; but them crooks play too deep a game fer most cornstables, ma'am. They us'ally has a pal wot travels ahead o' the show two er three days, mebbe as a phony jool'ry man, er on'y as a plain bindle stiff er somethin' sech. This gay-cat spots the fat banks 'n' swell mansions an' draws plans jest how ter rob 'em, an' sends all thet information back to his mob. An' then 'bout a couple days later along comes the main push with the circus, an' the last night the circus is in town they pulls the job an' gits away clean in the cold o' the next mornin'."

"Land sakes! That's the same name as the little hobo dog's got up-stairs. Why, here's the teeny Gay-Cat naow, dry as toast

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and his tongue a-drooping with hunger! Go right on eating, Mr. Red; I'll tend to him with a pie-plate full of victuals here beside the wood-box. But, doggie, where's your little master?"

The smell of food had proved too much for that blown-in-the-glass hobo, the Gay-Cat. He had waited for the Kid to swing open the kitchen door, until he could wait no longer. Thinking probably the Kid had lost his good rodeo sense, the dog had slipped in through the door, which was slightly ajar, while the boy's attention was engrossed in listening.

It was too late for the Frisco Kid to retreat. He swung the door more fully open and stepped into the kitchen. The bare flooring was sandy white underfoot with the many times it had been energetically scrubbed. The kitchen itself was a spacious high-ceiled and scrupulously clean room. There was a squat, shiny, nickel-plated range in one corner. Adorning the green-painted walls were a loud-ticking clock, a richly lithographed calendar and the yellow-flamed kerosene lamp in a gilded bracket. There in that navy-neat kitchen, seated in the sulfurous lamplight at an oil-cloth covered table, elbows squared and coat doffed before many steaming dishes of food, was Frisco Red.

He sat facing the Kid; but he was not looking at the boy. He was looking back over one shoulder toward where in the corner Miss Heffernan busied herself with the Gay-Cat. The disheveled red head, the bulbous nose and stubbled lantern jaw were in profile to the Kid. A laden knife was raised in one hand—that knife which alone did service to convey food—and his mouth was open like a fly-trap in a complete and blank surprize.

Wiping her moist forehead with the back of a very clean blue apron, the white-haired old lady lifted from stooping over the dog, turned and saw the boy.

"Sit right down, youngster," she said. "There's a place set for you opposite Mr. Red's plate. Sit right down while the food is hot, and don't worry none about your dog. He's eating here in the corner just like all git-out."

Frisco Red turned cumbersomely. The Kid slid into the indicated seat. The man gave the boy one surly look. Then with dexterous knife he busied himself in shouldering his way through the meal. It was quite palpable that the unexpected appearance of the Kid and the dog had dumfounded his slow wits.

As grimly he gorged himself he glanced from under heavy brows every now and then at the boy. The Kid knew that in his sluggish brain he was morosely turning over the whole situation. Perhaps he wondered just how much the Kid had heard.

There was no sound for a space save the quick munching of two busy jaws and the steady tick-ticking of the clock on the wall. By the time Red topped the dinner with coffee and biscuits, however, he had fairly recovered himself. He looked full at the boy, a malicious leer on his broad red face.

"This yunker here, mu'm, he ain't yer neffee be enny means—the long-lost Jerrold I've hearn so much about?"

"Oh, no, indeedy, Mr. Red, though I do wisht he were, he's so pale and wis'ful like. My Jerrold would be quite a man by naow. It's all of twenty year sence he run away."

"Twenty year! Thet's a long time, ma'am. An', ma'am, I begs yer parding fer remindin' yer of yer sadness; but this young feller is so beatin'ly gotten up I jest thought he must be some relashun o' your'n. He does look fine an' handsome now, if yer don't notice thet bruise on his face."

The Frisco Kid squirmed.

"A very natural mistake, Mr. Red. Those are Jerrold's clothes he's gadding in. Jerrold was a handsome boy, with sech eyes he should 'a' been a girl.

"But you were a-saying as how these bank burglars prepared their robberies, Mr. Red, and how the man that went in advance was called the gay-cat. Naow I should like to know why this youngster here ever gave his dog sech a or'nary, lawless name."

FRISCO RED in his turn was confused. His small eyes glanced quick and worriedly at the boy. He did not care to talk of bank robberies and yeggmen while the sophisticated Kid was present. He tried to dissimulate.

"Oh, thet dorg's name is hobo slang. Thet's quite differunt from crook slang, ma'am. But my, he's a cute, spry little feller, thet dorg; an' wot a fine yaller color! A dorg like him makes a good buddie, don't yer think, Mis' Heffernan? I'll bet now

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thet dorg an' this magnifercint stranger here hit it off purty thick on the road tergether."

"They are a picture, pore dears," sighed the old lady.

"I'll bet now yer couldn't buy thet dorg from thet kid fer love er money. He's all wrapped up in him, I says ter myself at first glance. I guess he's wo'th all o' a thousand dollars ter thet kid."

"I shouldn't wonder a bit, Mr. Red."

Mr. Red turned round from the table and, throwing one knee over the other, said with a boorish attempt at finesse—

"They tell me, Mis' Heffernan, ma'am, thet yuh sells dorgs fer thet much—all o' a thousand dollars!"

The woman looked at him askance, her eyes sharp with quick alarm, her hands fluttering palely.

"Why, yes," she hesitated confusedly. "Only last week——"

She broke off. Her spectacled eyes went to the clock ticking on the wall. Perhaps it was a subtle hint that now he had finished dinner he had stayed long enough.

"Oh, surely," she began again, withdrawing her eyes hurriedly. "I can sell any of my registered Airedale terriers for a thousand dollars and more."

She glanced again at the clock, removing her eyes only with evident effort. She rose to her feet and, still nervous and agitated, began hastily to clear the plates from the table.

"All o' a thousand dollars!"

Red seemed fascinated by the hugeness of the sum. He too glanced at the clock. The ill-concealed excitement of Miss Heffernan increased alarmingly as she noted the direction of his gaze.

The clock was shaped like a heavy-topped figure 8. The upper circle contained the hands and numeral-ringed face of the clock; in the lower and smaller circle swung the gilt pendulum. Save for a circlet round and small as a dollar, the glass of the lower circle was frosted and opaque. The pendulum could only be seen, every regular now and then, as it swung back and forth past the round clear face. Red appeared to study that swinging pendulum.

"All o' a thousand dollars!" he repeated with great unction, at length dropping his small eyes from the clock to the very obvious relief of Miss Heffernan. "Wot a stake! But here, it's gittin' on ter eight o'clock. I better be a-hikin' toward thet job in Chi."

He got to his feet. It was as if, seeing Miss Heffernan about to wash the dishes, he decided to go, fearing work to do. He put on his coat, which had been drying behind the range, and his shapeless and stained black hat.

Then with an odd and uncharacteristic politeness, he commenced to thank Miss Heffernan fulsomely for her charity. It was a terrible massacre of the Englishlanguage. He ended with an uncouth parade of hobo gallantry, bowing low and scraping one foot awkwardly.

He turned to the Frisco Kid then, an inexplicable expression upon his red-stubbled face.

"Young stranger," he said, "I wishes yer good night. Yer reminds me o' them days when I was young myself an' wore fine feathers sech as yuh got on now. Good night, young feller; I leaves youse in kind hands, an' very charitable."

Before the Kid could gather his intention he had reached out, grasped the boy's hand in a huge hairy paw, and was shaking it slowly and solemnly. The Kid did not know what to think. His lifeless hand was pumped up and down.

Then suddenly he understood. Red gave him the office. With his index finger he tapped on the back of the Kid's hand twice. It was the secret crook signal, meaning—

"I want to talk with you alone."

Abruptly Red turned then and went out by the screen door into the rain.

CHAPTER VIII

A MENTION OF GIPSY FRANK

OUTSIDE, in the night-enveloped open, the rain drenched the world with great, brooding persistency and a far, dull, booming cry. Within, inside the green-painted walls of the kitchen, the kerosene lamp pulsed up wildly and almost flared out as the screen door banged behind Frisco Red, then burned steadily, casting yellow beams over range and table, and pondering boy and woman. The range sang whirringly, and the clock on the wall deliberately ticked as if heavily adding up a sum.

The Frisco Kid abruptly broke the pensive spell. As if his mind were at last

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made up he shrugged himself and said:

"It's too bad, Miss Heffernan, that Mr. Red must walk the road in all the rain. Don't yer think he could linger in one of the sheds behind till the stormin' stops?"

The woman seemed to start out of profound reverie.

"Why, yes; yes, indeed. I had clean forgot about it raining. I'll call out the screen door to him."

But the kid was before her.

"Lemme go, Miss Heffernan. I'll run after an' tell him. An' I kin tie up Gay-Cat for the night out in the shed at the same time."

The screen door banged behind the Frisco Kid. The dog under his arm, he groped through the rain toward where the shaft of light through the screening of the door showed out dimly the carriage sheds in the rear. Behind him he heard Miss Heffernan call:

"That shed right yonder is tolerably empty, only for some straw and a few boxes of dog-biscuits. Tell Mr. Red he can make himself comfortable there until the weather clears off. You make a bed in the straw for the dog, youngster."

The Kid entered the blacker gloom of the shed. Off in one corner he made out a pin-point of light that glowed and waned. It was a cigaret.

"Thet yuh, Kid?" came the hoarse whisper of Frisco Red.

Quietly the boy put the dog upon his feet on the straw-covered flooring.

"Yes, Red."

The man must have been sitting upon one of the invisible boxes of dog-biscuits. There was the scrape of feet. He drew near the Kid.

"What's the lay, Red?"

The boy tried to peer through the darkness up at the man.

"Aw, yuh knows well enough, Kid. I'm gonna rob thet Miss Heffernan ternight. She's got all o' a thousand bucks stowed away in the house. That leddy-friend business was all the bunk. I've got a strong hunch thet thousand bucks is all stowed away, neat as pie, in the pendulum-box o' thet clock. I'm wise, Kid; I'm jerry.

"Wot d'yuh say? D'yuh wanter come in on it? A thousand bucks wot we'll split fifty-fifty. Wot say, Kid?"

"What yer want me to do, Red?"

"Jest lay low in the house an' flash me the office when she goes ter bed. It'll be dead easy, Kid. All yuh gotta do is light the lamp up in thet room under the roof. I kin see the winder from here. Then I'll know everything is jake, an' steal inter the kitchen an' cop thet thousand."

"But she locks up at night, most likely."

"Thet so? I never figgered thet. Let's see."

The cigaret glowed in the darkness; the rain tattooed echoingly upon the thin roof overhead.

"I gotcha, Kid! Yuh kin come downstairs in the night, makin' no noise, an' open the back door fer me. It's the real McCoy, thet idee. Yuh'll be on the spot then when I nabs the pile, an' we kin split right there, fifty-fifty."

The Frisco Kid sensed the deep guile of the man in his persistent repetition of the way they should share. Were Red ever to get his hands upon the money the boy knew he never would share with him, nor any one. To show forth a bit of the clumsy duplicity of the fellow the Kid said very quietly:

"But what will yer mob say, Red? What will they do when they finds yer double-crossed 'em?"

There in the thrumming darkness, the man started in surprize and a little fear.

"Wot mob? Who's double-crossed? Say, wot d'yuh mean, Kid?"

"Oh, I hearn yer ternight, Red. That was a neat ghost story about yegg gay-cats an' petermen, but I knowed yer graft as soon as I cotched two words. Yer gay-cat for a bunch of circus yeggs yerself, Red."

The lighted end of the cigaret in the man's mouth formed slow up and down streaks in the blackness, as thoughtfully the fellow nodded his head.

"Thet may be," he admitted sourly. "But they don't know nothin' about this Heffernan money. I was sent ahead ter look over the hick bank here. They'll come up with the circus termorrow.

"They'll never know I threw the skids under them. Before they gits here, we'll have copped, an' be skeedaddlin' along the road an' outer sight. They'll think I'm jugged som'eres, most like. It's plain as day. Wot d'yuh say, Kid? A thousand bucks, fifty-fifty."

"It sounds like the money all right, Red, but I dunno."

The Frisco Kid was playing his cards.

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He knew this man with whom he dealt. Had he not been his road-kid for three long, sorrowful years? He knew how sluggish of brain the burly fellow was, how innately cowardly of soul.

"Wot's the idee, Kid; wot's a-botherin' yuh?"

"Nothin' much, Red; on'y why don't yer cop one of them year-dales and sell it yerself!"

"An' have all them dorgs a-yawpin' like blue murder, fit ter rouse the town, an' mebbe git bit in the barg'in! Not me, Kid. Yer knows I hates dorgs. I don't monkey none with dorgs when I kin help it. No; this other stunt's easier. It's a dead cinch, Kid. All yuh gotta do——"

"I wisht it was, Red; but I dunno."

"Aw, wot's the idee; wot's eatin' yuh, anyway? Tell yer ol' buddie. Red'll fix it up, Kid; yuh kin depend on ol' Red."

The man's tone was wheedling. Said the boy most seriously:

"Well, it's like this, Red, old-timer. When I came up to the front door ternight Miss Heffernan, she says—

" 'Ain't you Jerrold?'

"Them's her very words, Red; the first words she says to me."

"Wal, wot o' thet? Didn't she arsk me the same question, too, come ter think on it? Say, yuh don't make ennything outer thet; do yuh, Kid? Yuh don't think now she was kinder expectin' some one along like?"

Red was suddenly very dependent upon the boy and most anxiously interested.

"That's jes' what's botherin' me. She is expectin' Jerrold ternight. And he ain't no kid any more, Red; he's a big fat stiff, she said so herself. I don't fancy none tacklin' a big fat stiff like her Jerrold, now."

THE man was quiet, the cigaret pasted on his lips. The raindrops pelted down overhead, sounding loud in the black silence as if pelting on tin The dog huddled against the boy's legs and whined softly.

"And that ain't all, Red. But right after yer left, Mis' Heffernan, she says to me—

" 'I hates to see Mr. Red a-walkin' the road in the rain, but Jerrold will be here ternight and he don't like them trampers hangin' round a little bit.' "

"Ternight?" the man repeated blankly. "Did she say ternight, Kid?"

"Them's her very words, Red, old-timer. An' that ain't all by any means. She wouldn't let me keep Gay-Cat in the house.

" 'Jerrold don't like dogs none,' she says. 'He calls 'em pesky critters an' can't stand 'em around nohow.'

"So I say as how I was comin' out here for to put up Gay-Cat for the night, when all I really wanted to do was to see yer.

" 'Yuh better hurry,' she calls after me kinder anxious-like. 'Jerrold will be here any time now.' "

The man made a swift movement in the blackness as if casting from his mouth the dead cigaret. He stepped out through the shed to view the house once again. The house squatted darkly massive before him save for the bright rectangular band of yellow light filtering through the screening of the kitchen door.

"Wot d'yuh think, Kid?" he whispered hoarsely back to the boy. "Yuh jedge it too risky?"

"Risky? I'll tell yuh what, Red. I wouldn't hang round here one second longer than I had to, ef I was yer. I'd beat it while the beatin' was good."

Slowly the man nodded his shapeless-hatted head.

"Mebbe ye're right. I'm sorter skeered, Kid. But I hates ter split with the mob; I'll only git a quarter divvy ef they pulls it. I wish I could go it alone. But it's too dangersome a job fer one man. I guess I better flash back the dope ter Gipsy Frank an'——"

"Gipsy Frank—who's him, Red?"

"Oh, a mugged gun, the leader o' the mob. He's a bad guy, the Gipsy, but a darned good peterman by all accounts. Knows all the good people, he does; has worked with some o' the best yeggs o' this country. He kin turn off a safe like it was a seegar-box, an' jimmy a winder quicker than look at him. An' plan! I never seed a gun could plan a job like the Gipsy kin. It'll be a cinch fer him ter cop off this place."

The Kid was silent. He could see white-haired Miss Heffernan moving to and fro behind the lighted screening, and there came to his ears above the drumming of the rain the homely rattle of plates. All in a heap and most acutely he felt very sorry for the poor old lady. Try as he would to save her, she seemed doomed to be robbed.

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Frisco Red's mob would be in Middletown with the circus the following day. There were at least three other crooks in that mob. What could he do to prevail against such odds and such black fatality? Peering through the darkness, glumly he watched Frisco Red, slouch-shouldered and shuffling-legged, go on round the house in the rain.

He felt a sudden itch in his throat. He coughed violently. Then he bent down over the dog hugging his legs.

"Yuh stay here, Gay-Cat," he whispered, his voice sounding unnaturally thick in his ears. "An' if any one comes ternight—if yer notices anything unus'al, old-timer—yuh jes' lift up yer voice an' howl. Yuh'll git a lot of company quick enough, Gay-Cat, 'cause there's all kinds of dogs round here."

CHAPTER IX

THE SPIRIT OF HIS ORDERS

THE Frisco Kid was coughing again as he opened the screen door and reentered the kitchen. But despite the racking seizure he noted that behind the gold-rimmed spectacles the eyes of the old lady were red and swollen-looking as from recent weeping. She pushed the spectacles up upon her furrowed brow, and, wiping her eyes with the blue apron, exclaimed:

"Laws-a-mercy, child, it's jest as I feared! You've catched cold from all that wetting. Sit right down on the cheer here and skin off those shoes and stockings. I'll brew up a hot mustard foot-bath to drive the cold from your head. And then a little hot camphorated oil to relieve your chest, and you can bundle right quick to bed."

Little old Miss Heffernan, for whom he felt so anxiously sorry, proceeded then to mother the Kid as if he were small and frail as nine-year-old Crybaby Kid himself. The water coming to a boil upon the purring stove, she poured it into a little foot-tub and, kneeling down upon the white flooring, tested it with a bony elbow lest he scald his reed-like legs therein. She draped a towel from his knees over the sides of the tub to hold in the sharply pungent steam. Then with gentle hands she propelled his legs up and down in the medicinal bath, admonishing him:

"Wo'k your feet up and down. That'll cause the mustard fumes to rise and soak through your chilled limbs. And tomorrow you'll feel brash and chipper as a new penny."

She nodded her bowed head slowly.

"Tomorrow," she repeated softly. "And tomorrow you will be out again and walking the long, hard roads, you and the dog. Wouldn't you like to stay here with me, youngster, just for a little?"

She looked up at him, a velvety brilliance in her red-rimmed eyes.

"After a spell you might come to like it here, and then p'rhaps you would go to school and grow into a fine l'arned man."

The Kid understood. She wished to endow him with the old ambitious dream she had held for Jerrold. He did not answer. He could not tell her of the errand he was in duty bound to execute. And yet, constantly reminding him of that errand and of his temporary thralldom to Strong-Arm, he saw whenever he looked that way, his two suits drying behind the stove.

When he had come down to dinner he had left those suits lying in a sodden heap on the rag-carpeted floor of the little bedroom up under the eaves. She had climbed the dark stairs and fetched down the soaked clothing during the interval he was without in the carriage shed, listening to the black villainy of Frisco Red. It was only another of her sweet and motherly kindnesses. But it was what those two suits poignantly symbolized, the mission he had obligated himself to perform, which put it entirely out of the question for him to linger here.

Besides, even had he no errand to execute, he knew he never could stay on in one place. He could not explain to himself the urge for moving, let alone any one else; but thus it had always been since he was a little tyke of twelve and first had heard the call.

But Miss Heffernan seemed to understand!

"It's always that way," she sighed, smiling sadly and yet indulgently. "Boys come and stay a brief spell and then grow res'less as little dogs to move on. In twenty year I haven't been able to hold a one. Oh, the mis'able *Wanderlust* that draws the teeny wayward feet!"

The Frisco Kid looked down at the bowed head of the little lady, as she knelt there at his feet and gently aided in moving his legs up and down beneath the towel. He could see the pinkness of the scalp through the thin threads of white hair tied severely at

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the back in a compact knot. He felt, all at once, as if he would like to hug that old head, so thoughtful of his needs, so motherly to care. He said in a hoarse but gentle voice:

"Yer been cryin', Miss Heffernan. And I hates to see yer cryin'. It's nothin' I done; it's not 'cause I can't stay on; now is it, Miss Heffernan, honest?"

The old lady smiled wanly and shook her head in negation.

"What a child; what a funny little fellow! You shouldn't mind me, youngster. Tut! It is nothing at all; jest the plain carryings-ons of a old woman."

She rose hastily to her feet and went toward the range. In a saucer she heated some oil of camphor for the Kid's chest.

"I thought," persisted the boy, "that mebbe yer expected some one ternight, an' he didn't come, an' it kinder hit yer hard. Yer didn't expect Jerrold ternight, now did yer, ma'am?"

She turned quickly from the stove, fluttering with dismay, as if once again and with uncanny surety he had surprized her in her close-guarded secret. She stood, suspiciously watchful, flushing guiltily, in a constrained silence. Then, as if suddenly determined to trust him with some knowledge which seemed extremely difficult for her to keep from his prying young eyes, she advanced swiftly toward him, saying:

"Why, yes, child; so I did. But not necessar'y tonight; just around this time tolerably, either tonight or tomorrow or p'rhaps the next day. But, laws, it beats me how you l'arned all that, child."

The Kid coughed a little. The sweet, clean smell of the heating oil was pervading the room and tickling his nostrils.

"Well, when I first came to the door, yer asked me was I Jerrold. I thought then yer expected some one, and now when I come upon yer cryin' I thought it was 'cause of somethin' I done, or else 'cause he hadn't showed up."

"That's true; I did ask you that when I opened the door. You see, I have been expecting him for a week naow. And I'm so all over trembly and feverish I jest don't know what to do."

"But how do yer know he's a-comin' home? Has he written yer?"

"No; that's jest it. I don't quite understand; I can't make it out nohow. But men who have come along the road have told me that he should be here this week."

"Men? What kinder men? Mebbe they've been stringin' yer, ma'am."

"Oh, I can not believe that. These were good men, but pore and walking. They were trampers. One came to me about a month back and asked for something to eat; and then after he had done eating he says:

" 'Miss Heffernan, you haven't had word from your nephew in many a year. Well, I have met up with him. I saw him arrested. He was put in jail for another man's felony. He wouldn't expose the other man because that man had been his friend once.

" 'He's a fine fellow, Miss Heffernan; you have reason to be proud of Jerrold. And I wouldn't feel badly because he's in jail. He will be out very soon naow. He's got many a good friend on the outside.' "

"And did he?" asked the Frisco Kid, strangely interested. "Did he git away from stir?"

"I think he did, child, 'cause two days back another tramper came by and said as how Jerrold had got out from Joliet, and ——"

"Joliet!"

"Why, sartainly, child; the prison upstate a ways. Why do you ask? Why you so su'prized? Have you heard something, youngster?"

There was sudden burning excitement in her old eyes.

THE Frisco Kid fidgeted. His brain was glowing with illuminating surmises of which he never before had dreamed; but, none too certain of his snap judgment, startled himself by the vivid connection between the events of Miss Heffernan's story and those of his own life during the past twenty-four hours, he wondered how much to divulge.

He feared to raise the motherly old lady's hopes lest he should prove wrong and all her hopes be cast down later. He feared more to tell all he surmised, lest he disclose thereby some secret of Strong-Arm and incur that dread personage's ire and vengeance.

"No; I didn't hear nothin'," he stalled.

The poignant disappointment which sharply engraved her old face swept him with pity. He decided all at once to tell a bit of what he knew.

"On'y last night," he added almost glibly, "in a hobo hangout called The Willows where I jungled up with Frisco Red

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and a whole gang of road-kids, Portugee, the leader of the push, guv me the office as how upper Illinois was dangerous 'cause a loser, a convict, had jes' escaped from Joliet. An' this afternoon the sheriff of the county hisself came outer a barn with a gun in his hand an' shooed me back on a road clost by here. Tol' me to keep outer upper Illinois, he did, an' head south. So I jes' knowed right off he was lookin' for that zebra what had made his getaway from stir."

The woman did not notice that the Frisco Kid had said he had been with Red the previous night. She was too excited to notice such a detail. She hovered over the boy, trembling like a humming-bird over a honey-brimming blossom.

"That'll be Jerrold!" she exclaimed. "He has escaped and is on his way back to me, jest as that last tramper said. Oh, I do trust he has done nothing very wrong in leaving the jail! But the truth is he never should have been put in jail. What a world, what a troubleful world this is! Naow I shall have to have some git-up to myself. That last tramper said I was to hide Jerrold and give him clothes if he needed them.

" 'But he'll prob'ly have changed from his prison suit before he comes here,' the tramper said."

The Kid was silent. He looked down somberly at the knickerbockers and Norfolk jacket on his lean frame. But he did not see those Fauntleroy trappings. He was thinking of the extra suit of clothes and the cloth cap that Strong-Arm had given him in The Willows the night before. That suit and cap were meant for Jerrold. He understood now. He was to bring the suit and cap to the furnace trusty of the warden's house, and that trusty was to give them to Jerrold.

But Jerrold was no longer in Joliet. He had made good his getaway. He was coming to his aunt, Miss Rose Lydia Heffernan. Would it be wise for the Kid to continue on toward Joliet to carry out his orders to the letter and by so doing probably miss Jerrold wide; or should he stay here at Miss Heffernan's, and, fairly certain that Jerrold would arrive in a day or two, be prepared to give up the suit to him then?

"Miss Heffernan, ma'am," he asked cautiously, "has yer got a suit all ready for Jerrold?"

She shook her head.

"No," she confessed. "I'm so tied down here with the dogs, and naow with Selina sick and gone, I haven't been able to git to town."

"Well, if yer don't mind, Miss Heffernan, I'll give yer one of my suits. I've got two of them, yer know, ma'am, and the outside one will fit Jerrold to a T, I'm thinkin'. Yer'll be su'prized, Miss Heffernan."

"Oh, you little muggins, that's so good of you! There are the two suits jest a-steaming behind the stove. But you're sure naow you won't need both suits? It's cold out of night, you said."

"Oh, that's all right, Miss Heffernan, ma'am," said the Kid magnanimously. "It's comin' on fine weather and I'd be changin' soon anyways."

The Frisco Kid was decided. He would remain with Miss Heffernan a few days to see that Jerrold got the suit and his orders were fulfilled. He was taking no chances with Strong-Arm.

From all he had heard that evening he judged Strong-Arm's mob to be a large and powerful one. They had aided Jerrold's getaway from Joliet. They had sent men along the road to prepare and make easy his escape.

He did not believe Jerrold had suffered for another's crime. That was a ghost story built expressly for the old lady's ears. Jerrold was, he judged, only another yegg member of Strong-Arm's mob.

Another thing decided the Kid. Miss Heffernan was to be robbed, he felt sure, by Frisco Red's mob the following evening—the evening of the circus' one-night stand. If he should remain with her he might be able in some way to save her from Frisco Red and that greater menace, Gipsy Frank.

"Miss Heffernan," he said quite boldly, "I think I'll stay on with you here jes' for a while. Once Jerrold comes yer won't mind so much, and then I can be a-movin' along, me and Gay-Cat."

She was placing upon his chest a red flannel cloth, warmly damp with the camphorated oil. Convulsively she hugged him to her.

"Oh, you pert little muggins!" she exclaimed. "To think of staying on jest to keep a old woman company! You're a dear, child! Maybe if you do stay a spell you may want to stay all time, for ever and ever. And then I will be so glad and proud!"

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Despite all her experience with road-kids, her wistful old eyes flooded with longing and fond hope.

But the Frisco Kid knew he never could stay on. An urge was in him. That urge had drawn him out of the arms of his graying mother when he was twelve, and after a circus train that had dipped into the little valley of home to extract its tribute of quarters and the irretrievable tribute of boys.

That miserable urge kept him moving—moving to find peace.

It was the *Wanderlust*. The accursed *Wanderlust* would never suffer him to remain here.

CHAPTER X

A ROKERBEN IN ROMANY

SHORTLY before dawn the Frisco Kid was awakened by a great commotion among the Airedales and police dogs. Yelping shrilly or exploding in throaty rumbles according to their species, the dogs were stewing and milling round and tumultuously flinging themselves against the walls of their carriage-shed kennels, the groaning of boards and the metallic clash of wire netting adding to the hubbub. The Frisco Kid sat upright in the little green-painted iron bed, his heart in his throat, his eyes wide and dull with fear.

Had Frisco Red already fetched Gipsy Frank and the others of the mob, and come back at this early hour to break into the house?

In suden craven panic the Kid cowered deep beneath a small mountain of tightly clutched bedclothes. And then as he lay there hushed and unbreathing there came creeping through the frenzied uproar to his ears a heavy undertone of sound from far off. There were the creaking of straining axles and the rumble of heavy wagon wheels, the dull padding of horses' hoofs and the sharp crackling of drivers' whips. A considerable caravan was laboring near along the road.

The Frisco Kid was out of bed and at the window in a jiffy—that small dormer window through which Red had wanted him to signal. Outside it had tired of raining. The sky against the window-panes showed as yet no streak of silver or glow of soft rose announcing the nearness of daybreak. Without, the whole world still swam in a misty sea of blacks and dim grays.

By standing to one side and peering out obliquely, the boy could look down above bulking gray carriage-sheds and black yew hedges upon a short section of the road. He knew it was the road because, snailing along it, he could make out the lights of a covered touring-car followed by a procession of heavy van-like wagons drawn by straining pairs of horses. It looked like the early morning parade of vegetable wagons into a large city.

Each bulky covered wagon bore under the driver's footboard a stable lantern to illuminate the way and another lantern, swinging from the rear axle, to point the path to the fellow next following. By those swaying yellow flares the Kid could see that the vans were all painted crimson and ornately gilded as to cornices and wheels, and that they were driven by high-perched, slouch-hatted and shadowy figures, swathed in blankets, and slumped and swaying over the reins as if dead asleep.

There were barred black openings in the sides and rears of some of the vehicles through which came occasional throaty explosions, deeper than those of the excited hounds, and yelps so shrill as to put to shame the Airedales. In an interval between the wagons there slowly lurched along on massive pads of hoofs three elephants, looking stupendous in the flaring yellow lantern-light and rolling at each stride like ships in a rude sea.

The Frisco Kid made out, at that, the dim letters of gilt below the ornately carven cornices of the wagons: "Bigley's Circus and Congress of Wild Animals." The circus was coming to town!

The old fascination swept through the hobo boy. It was as if he were once more back in Grass Valley and the circus train had rumbled high up on the side of mountain and the sound dropped down, calling to him, beckoning and urging.

He dressed hurriedly. His own clothing and that extra suit were drying out behind the range in the kitchen. He dressed in the knickers and Norfolk jacket. But he did not mind the Fauntleroy regalia. He was thrall to a compelling glamor. The circus had called to him with its pied-piper voice; and, caring not at all how ill-becoming was his costume, heeding naught, he must answer that alluring call.

The house was silent, the long halls dark, with a feeling of cold. Stealing down the

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creaking stairs and out of the kitchen door, the Kid went to the carriage shed in the rear and called softly to his dog. The Gay-Cat was padding back and forth, sniffing with prolonged questing breaths under the shed door, restless and nervous over the many strange sounds and smells in the night. Noiselessly the Kid swung open the door.

As he went down the graveled driveway to the road he thought he glimpsed the vague, wistful face of Miss Heffernan looking after him from a second-story window. Then, the Gay-Cat romping and frisking about him in the moist freshness of the rosy day-break, he followed the wagon-show into town and on through the town to the farther outskirts.

IT DAWNED a glad April day, the sunshine bright and warming, a fresh, sweet tang exuding from the damp, black fields, birds chattering in the rose-bushes of the old-fashioned gardens and grasshoppers snapping up out of the tangled weeds of the waste lots. On their way through town the Frisco Kid and the Gay-Cat were joined by other youngsters and dogs. When at length they reached the circus lot every small tad and terrier in town was on the scene.

Such a scene! What bawling of coarse voices, what cursing and ordering about! What rush and flurry! Roughly garbed men howled frantic commands, thick-studded with oaths, at gangs of ragged negro roustabouts, and these latter rushed this way and that with huge tent-stakes and rolls of canvas, or bent their sweating backs to arduous digging and lifting and pulling on myriad ropes.

The lot was a place of mad excitement and uproar. There seemed no order to anything. Yet rapidly, almost magically, a canvas city raised up out of the chaotic odds-and-ends to confound the lovely Spring morning.

The Frisco Kid watched the white city come into being—poles raised, stakes driven, guys clamped and tautened, canvas spread over all. The smell of the damp canvas, of sweating human beings and of axle-grease, even the animal odors so inseparable from a circus, were sweet to the boy's nostrils. He reveled in kicking up the sawdust spread underfoot, in peering into the barred cages of leopards and hyenas and monkeys as each was backed by its caretaker and driver into place in the newly erected menagerie.

Though razorbacks cursed him roundly and sought to drive him away with threatening tent-stakes the Frisco Kid was in a seventh heaven of delight. Round and round the circular tiers of plank seats in the Big Top he raced, pursued by the excited, happy dog. It was wonderful. The Gay-Cat thrilled to the circus as much as did the Kid.

The boxes that served as ticket-officers were hastily put in place; the faded, gaudy banners of the side shows swung down from tall poles on either hand of the midway. Their short hour of frantic endeavor over, a crowd of negro roustabouts engaged in a boisterous game of craps behind a black top, while others lay outstretched in the shadow of the motion-picture tent, their coats spread over them, asleep.

There was a constant coming and going of greasy, unwashed-looking performers. Now and then one glimpsed spangles and tights under long cloaks as glassy-eyed and tangle-haired women issued from the wagons where they had spent a jolting night and sauntered over to the small dining-tent for breakfast.

"HI S'Y! Hi there, me young toff with the yaller dicky-bird!"

He was a pasty-faced, skeleton-framed, thin-haired young fellow in a cheap-looking check suit, a cap and celluloid collar without a tie. He issued from the shadowy entry of a "kid tent" or side show and, beckoning, thus hailed the Frisco Kid.

From his aspirated and nasal accent, the boy knew him to be a "limey" of some kind. Approaching, the Kid was informed that the cheap-jack wanted him to run to the bar of the village hotel for some beer.

"Four or five bottles, s'y. I'll p'y ten cents to ye when yer bring back the byer. I'm thet dry inside I bally well feel like I m'y go off with a puff if I sh'd light a cigarite. An' the Gipsy needs a few swigs, too, or he cawn't go on with his ballyhoo this arfternoon."

"Yer'll be here when I come back?" asked the Kid, accepting the currency note from the man.

"Sure; I'm ticket-butcher fur this bloomin' kid-show. Arsk fur Anzac Pete or the Austrylian, if yer like thet better. Or arsk fur Frank, the ballyhoo blokie, if ye don't see me. Hurry now, me cove, an' I'll give yen ten cents fur to buy lollies. The forenoon

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parade will be startin' soon and I'll have to be off without me bloomin' drink."

Not until he was trotting back with the parcel of four bottles from the village inn did it strike the Frisco Kid that in referring to the Gipsy and Frank, the ballyhoo man, Anzac Pete had meant none other than that peterman, Gipsy Frank, the leader of Frisco Red's mob. Quickly he made up his mind to ask for Gipsy Frank and not the Australian, once back in the circus lot, in order that he might get a good view of that yeggman.

But pacing back and forth in the midway and thirstily awaiting his return was Anzac Pete. Perforce the Kid could try no such shrewd subterfuge as he had planned, but must hand over the beer to the Australian and glumly receive his commission.

Anzac Pete popped out of the dark interior of the side show a few minutes later. The Kid stuck to him like a brother amid all the hurlyburly of preparation for the forenoon grand parade. Through the offices of the Australian he got a seat in the band-wagon, riding back and forth through town in close company with the music and immediately behind the clowns.

There were seven comical cut-ups in the parade, but only two were really hired as clowns. Anzac Pete, for instance, always marched in the parade dressed as a clown in order to make the circus appear to have a larger aggregation of talent than it really had. Whether Gipsy Frank marched as an acrobat, bareback rider or clown, the Frisco Kid did not know.

All in a blaze of glory the Kid and the Gay-Cat came back to the lot as the morning drew on into noon. The boy did not leave the glamorous circus to return to Miss Heffernan's for lunch. He appeased his hunger and that of his dog with peanuts from the shrilling roaster. The peanuts were in payment for another errand; he had run up the main street for paper bags for the peanut butcher.

He munched and listened to the shell workers talk singsongingly of the elusive little pea. He watched the phony grifters wide-eyed as they short-changed and swindled the gathering townsmen.

TIME came for the opening of the afternoon performance. The grounds filled with uncomfortably garbed men, and women in sunbonnets, who dragged by the hand awed, gaping children in starched, crinkly dresses. Wary lest any roustabout catch him in the act, the Kid dived under a flap of the main tent; the dog curved his back under and after him; then both clambered up between two lower tiers of seats and sat on the hard boards through the marvel and splendor and surprizes of the show.

There were the glittering, colorful trappings of the grand opening concourse; the irresistible horseplay of the clowns; the daredeviltry of the aerial acrobats, flying from one giant swing through the air to the other; the dexterity of the Japanese tight-rope walker who slid down from the very tent-top. Through the succession of astonishing wonders and spine-tingling thrills, boy and dog watched in fascinated breathlessness, never closing a mouth, unblinking of eye, bewitched, ecstatically transported.

The side shows were in full swing when the Frisco Kid came out after the performance. Followed by the dog, he went slowly down the midway between the two rows of features, missing naught, pausing at each in turn.

He paused finally before that side show which flaunted on a glaring banner the painting of a long-haired, dark-skinned man with enormous blocks of wood in his ears and a severed head upheld by its forelock in one hand. The banner was entitled, "Sabu-Suva the Head-Hunter." There was a platform built out in front of the tent, on one end of which was a box where sat the ticket-seller, none other than Anzac Pete. About the platform strode the ballyhoo man, singsonging loudly:

"Sabu-Suva the Head-Hunter, capshured in the wilds o' Su-mar-tra! The wilds o' Su-mar-tra, ladies 'n' gents, where the teak an' banyan trees grow by the mile. Now on exhibisshun on the inside. On the inside, inside! Ten cents. Ten cents ter see Sabu-Suva the Head-Hunter, a king an' a sultan an' a raja *muda* o' Su-mar-tra. Come one, come all.

"Sabu-Suva the Su-mar-tra Head-Hunter. Carries a shield wot he calls a *kliau*, all decorated with the hair o' all them men an' womens wot he's killed an' scalped. Have yuh seen Sabu-Suva the Head-Hunter? Now showin' on the inside fur the first time. First time, first time! Step right up, ladies 'n' gentlemin. Ten cents. Ten cents is all we charge."

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The spieler was a big, heavy-set man with a broad face of a peculiar swarth hue. His eyebrows met over the nose in a straight black band. He wore no coat. He was garbed in a very pink shirt, black corduroy trousers, high boots and a bandanna round the neck. His hair, beneath the slouch hat, was short and inky black. The Frisco Kid knew him at once for an American Gipsy. He thought him to be that Romany yeggman about whom he had heard so much—Gipsy Frank!

What puzzled the Frisco Kid was something hauntingly familiar about the man. Somewhere before the Kid felt certain he had seen that broad dark face; somewhere before he had heard those gruff, heavy tones. He strove to place the fellow.

The Frisco Kid as a hobo was an intimate of those other rodeos, the Gipsies. Often had he stayed overnight in some Romany hatsh or camp, and traveled a space along the road in the *wardos*, those large covered vans.

He knew the Black Men of Zend, their life and tongue and different ethnic traits. He knew that in the whole country there were only about a dozen distinct families. This fellow he judged to be one of the Hares or the Lovells because the men of those clans are usually broad-faced, dark and thick-chested.

"It won't make er break yuh," ballyhooed the Gipsy. "Ten cents. Ten cents is all we asks, ladies 'n' gents, ter see Sabu-Suva the Head-Hunter. Kilt all them men an' womens with his *sumpitan*, he did, a long bamboo wot he blows arrers outer. A deadly weapon ladies 'n' gentlemin. Have yuh seen Sabu-Suva with his turrible blowpipe?

"Yer last chance, folks; yer last chance ter see a real live blood-thirsty head-hunter from the wilds o' Su-mar-tra. The race is almost distinct 'n' wiped out. Sabu-Suva is the on'y one left o' his kind an' he's showin' now, fur the first an' last time, on the inside. On the inside, inside!

"Step right up, ladies 'n' gents. He wot hesitates is lost. On'y a dime admisshun. Ten cents, folks. Ten cents ter see Sabu-Suva—Sabu-Suva the wild man o' Sur-mar-tra!"

The Frisco Kid noticed of a sudden a man in the crowd who seemed trying to attract the spieler's attention. This fellow was obviously a Gipsy. He wore the black corduroy trousers and velveteen jacket, adorned with white shell buttons, so uniform with his race. On his head was a moleskin cap. His hair fell in long, black, unkempt strands over his ears, and pendant from each ear was a heavy gold ring. In one hand he carried a bandanna-wrapped parcel. In his eyes was that stare so peculiar to the Zincali.

Presently the ballyhoo man got the office from him. As he finished the spiel and the come-ons stepped to the ticket-box and on up the runway to start off the crowd he came over to the edge of the platform near the other Gipsy.

"*Latcho divvus, pal,*" he greeted in Romany.

The Frisco Kid sidled toward the two through the hesitating crowd. From his haphazard association with the people of Cales he could understand that gibberish called Romany. He knew that the ballyhoo man had said—

"Good day, brother."

"*Tu shan o didakai jin* as Gipsy Frank?" asked the other. "You are the part-Romany known as Gipsy Frank?"

The ballyhoo man nodded.

"*Mandi shan yek o Lavells,*" he answered in his gruff voice. "I am one of the Lovells."

"*Mandi shan lasho lees o Romanitshel. Mandi av rokerben from o gorgio,* Frisco Red," the other introduced himself. "I am Louis Lees, the Romany. I come with a speech from the gentile, Frisco Red."

The Frisco Kid understood. The newcomer was a Gipsy of the Lees family who had met up along the road with Frisco Red. And Red had given him some verbal message to fetch back to Gipsy Frank. According to the ethics of the road the man was in duty bound to carry that message as from one hobo to the other. The fact that the message was to be given to another Gipsy made the duty something ethnically sacred and covenantal.

Speaking in their little known language, neither Gipsy worried lest they should be understood by some one in that throng of country folk. Jabbered the newcomer:

"*Besh alay* with Frisco Red *adre o ketchéma. Yov pen ratti sig. Jaw te rawni* Heffernan's *apre o drom* outside *o gav. Rawni* has a *dukkerin*—one thousand dollars—*adre o* clock *apre o* wall. *Yov pen* all's *kushto,* but *te* watch out *jukels ta* a *gorgio*

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tshavo. Yov pen yov thought it wise *te* carry a *swegler ta* be *del-apre te maw.*"

The Kid comprehended. Translated literally, the man had said:

"Sat down with Frisco Red in a road saloon. He said tonight early. Go to lady Heffernan's on the road outside the town. Lady has a fortune—one thousand dollars—in the clock upon the wall. He said all's good, but to watch out for dogs and a gentile son. He said he thought it wise to carry a pipe or gun, and be ready to kill."

"*Del o del bakk!*" exclaimed Gipsy Frank in a kind of grunt. It was the Romany, "Good luck!"

The Cale known as Louis Lees started away through the crowd.

The Frisco Kid lingered no longer.

"Here, Gay-Cat!" he called softly to the dog scratching the earth under the platform.

The man above started perceptibly at the Kid's incautious call; and looked sharply down at the boy. He saw the yellow Gay-Cat whisk into view. Then he watched boy and dog zigzag off through the crowd thronging the midway.

"The Frisco Kid!" he muttered savagely. "I'd never knowed him in thet fancy rig ef he had not called the dorg. But wot's thet kid doin' round here? I wonder," he added somberly, "I wonder ef his ole buddie Atlanta Slim's anywhere about."

There seemed cause for fear in his sudden strain of thought. But abruptly he chuckled.

"Wot's the matter with me?" he ended. "Here I'm goin' off my nut 'bout a gun wot's safe in stir fur a stretch o' twenty years!"

CHAPTER XI

THE TALK IN THE GULLY

IT WAS coming on evening. The smoke of supper-time lifted lazily from scattered chimneys among willows and old oaks. This was the hamlet of Bedford, fourteen miles up the railroad from Middletown.

In a grass-soft gully between the level crossing and the town Frisco Red was brewing coffee in a lard-can over a tiny fire. He had removed from his slouch shoulders a new serge coat and, folding it carefully, had deposited it upon a disheveled clump of grass. No gay-cat fellow-posterman was with him in the dingle, nor covered wagon nor stamping horse. He was altogether alone, cooking his eventide "java."

A passenger train lumbered near from the south, hallooing disconsolately for the level crossing through the hush of the evening. Came a sharp rattle of wheels and the pounding of hurried hoofs on the wooden bridge spanning the gully. Red looked up with bovine interest, to see a two-wheeled cart racing for the crossing, a black-garbed, preacher-like figure standing beside the driver and signaling wildly with a greenish umbrella.

Down by the flag-station that alone put the town of Bedford on the railroad maps the agent threw over his block signal; the locomotive shrilled several times and jerked to a steam-hissing halt; and the preacher clambered out of the dog-cart and dragged a cumbersome carpet-bag toward the nearest dusty coach. With the same precipitation with which the preacher boarded the train, two figures dropped down from the forward platform of a baggage-car and came hurrying back along the opposite track toward the smoke of Red's fire.

The one was a man in overalls, black neckerchief and cap turned inside out, the yellow silk lining exposed. He was medium-sized, deep-chested, solid, built like a boulder. The other was a diminutive shadow in faded red sweater and knee trousers. There were savage welts on the boy's bare legs and a red rise across tiny nose and cheeks. The two were Strong-Arm and his road-kid, Chick.

They paused on the ballast gravel to look down into the dingle at the blowsy hobo and his tiny fire. Red was somberly busy just then, lifting the lard-tin between two sticks from a spot where the embers had grayed to another place where the embers glowed red and hot. But Strong-Arm recognized with a shock of surprize that red-smudged, bloated face. He turned quickly to the bare-legged boy beside him.

"It's inter town for yuh, Chick. Bang the screen doors fur some handouts. We'll chow here in this holler with our old frien', Frisco Red."

Strong-Arm purposely raised his voice as he ended, and the words carried through the still, vaguely gold air to the tramp below in the gully. Frisco Red straightened from bending over the fire. He looked up. The charred sticks dropped from his hands.

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He stared at Strong-Arm above there at the top of the gully, as if at some fearsome apparition that had risen from the grass-roots.

Chick started off briskly along the track for the village among the willows and old oaks across the bridge. With sharp certitude of stride Strong-Arm came down the grass-slippery side of the dingle, the suppressed violence of hip-swagger and arm-swing telling of hidden strength, of vigorous and brisk nerves and muscles acting together in perfect coordination.

Red stooped for one of the charred sticks and made to straighten the lard-tin in its bed of embers. But his hand shook so that he spilled some of the brownish contents with a loud sizzling, and only saved the can from entirely upsetting by letting the stick remain where he had poked it under one end.

Strong-Arm came close. He removed the inverted cap, and without a word seated himself upon the serge coat Red so carefully had folded and placed in the grass. Red turned around, gulping hard in desperate effort at casual greeting. He saw that Strong-Arm was sitting on his valued property. But as if he failed to notice that, as if indeed he saw Strong-Arm for the first time, he quavered in his hoarse whisky-voice—

"Ef it ain't—the Finn Kid hisself!"

"Strong-Arm's me moniker," corrected the man on the coat evenly. "I outgrowed thet Finn Kid handle years ago, Red, when I quit bein' a beggin' kid for yuh. But it's funny thet me an' yuh should meet up a'gin arter all this time. I guess it's all o' twelve years; eh, Red? Funny, don't yuh think?"

He chuckled mirthlessly as if at some hidden joke, his gash of mouth unmoving, wooden-lipped. Red, watching him with fearful nervousness, forced a laugh also; but there was in that laugh little of ease and naught of pleasure.

There followed a painful interval of silence. The coffee boiled over. Red dug up two short sticks and gingerly lifted the smoking can off the embers. He fished out a scrap of newspaper from a trouser pocket. Winding this about the lard-tin to save his fingers from being burned, he tilted the piping-hot, brownish liquid into two tomato-cans he had set near by.

"I wonders," spoke Strong-Arm abruptly —"I wonders does my kid, Chick, ever have the notions I used ter have when I begged handouts fur yuh, Frisco Red?"

Red's fingers slipped from the lard-can; he looked up sharply. Strong-Arm was gazing down the road where a cloud of gold-brown dust hung beneath willows and old oaks. He seemed speaking more to himself than to his apprehensive listener.

"But no," he added. "Chick's too chicken-hearted an' babyish. He's scary of his own shadder."

The oblong, greenish eyes turned full on Red, and, recalling himself, the man chuckled.

"It's funny," he explained, "the idees I git, seein' yuh here an' thet kid dodgin' inter them trees. It all comes back to me now, how I used ter feel when I was yer prushun, Red, twelve long years ago."

"Aw, Strong-Arm, I wasn't so wurser!" expostulated the other hastily. "Me, I was allus half-skeered o' youse, even though yuh was on'y a yunker. It was yer eyes, Strong-Arm—them queer, greenish eyes. Thet's why I had ter beat youse up so—I didn't want yuh ter git wise I was afeered o' youse.

"Youse was a queer un," he went on guilefully, as if desirous of changing the subject by gradual means to more pleasant topics. "Yuh was allus listenin' with open mouth to them soap-box spielers an' then comin' blabbin' back ter me about the Cap'talist System an' Indoostrial Freedom an' the Abolitiun o' Wage Slavery, when needer me nor yuh never held no job more'n a week at a time."

He laughed shakily.

"Youse was a queer un, all right, Strong-Arm," he ended.

STRONG-ARM'S almond-shaped eyes widened a trifle as if Red had surprized him with light on a forgotten side of his character.

"It's not thet I'm thinkin' on, Red," he said. "No, not thet a-tall."

He went on grimly:

"When I was a measly kid and yuh used ter beat me up black an' blue, Red, I used ter dream of growin' big an' strong overnight and, jist when yuh reached out to grab me, turnin' round sudden an' manhandlin' yuh a-plenty. I had every step of them manhandlin's doped out pretty. And I used ter stand afore them second-hand pawnshops when youse and me was panhandlin' the main drag of a town— Gee, how I longed to git my fins on one of them guns in the winders! Then, at the first kick

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or blow from yuh I'd have cooked yuh sure.

"And here we be, all met up ag'in," he pointed out. "And I could beat youse up proper if I wanted to, or croak yuh with the gun I've got under me arm. It's like me old dream come true, Red."

The older hobo sat down suddenly. Under the red stubble his face had gone gray.

"Aw, Strong-Arm!" he gulped. "Aw, say now, Strong-Arm, all them's bygones. Youse ain't got no idee o' thet terday! Me, I'd think yuh'd be sata'fied, the way yuh scared the livers an' lights outa me thet time we parted comp'ny back twelve years ago.

"But here," he added jerkily, producing from a hip pocket a small flask of colorless liquid. "Let's fergit all them bygones in a good cup o' coffee royal."

"Alky!" exclaimed Strong-Arm. "Gee, I've been thirstin' fur a drink o' alky ever since I hit these horstile parts."

"But coffee royal's better, Strong-Arm," said Red, solicitous as a salesman. "There ain't nothin' stronger in the booze line than pure alky mixed with jamocha."

He got to his knees and emptied a goodly portion of the flask into the steaming coffee in the two tomato cans. By his swift production of the alcohol he felt he had staved off imminent peril. He handed Strong-Arm one of the tins. The two sipped the hot, brownish admixture with loud sucking sounds. It was surprizing how quickly an alien glow came to their eyes.

Strong-Arm lowered the tin from his gash of mouth and began slowly revolving it between stubby fingers the better to mix the ingredients. A dark flush was sweeping the muddy complexion of his face. There was in the heightened green of his eyes an odd and somehow loose quizzical expression.

"Say, Red, old boy," he remarked. "However did us two part comp'ny? I've clean forgot. Yuh say I scared youse. How come thet, an' me on'y a kid?"

An exaggerated look of disquietude and deep chagrin engraved the older hobo's red face. So the timely appearance of the alcohol had not entirely shifted Strong-Arm's thoughts from the past. He was a deal taken aback. But he had made the break and he felt he must go through with it. He took another sip.

"Well, it was the last night we was together as road-kid an' jocker. It was on the Santa Fee som'eres in New Mexico, one o' them hot nights thet was clear an' still as a Sunday. At a place called Jarales thet day I had give yuh an all-round good whalin' 'cause yuh had got a setdown from one o' the waitresses in a Harvey House without comin' back with no handout fer me.

"We was holdin' down the decks an' bumpers of a freight, an' the shacks was sure horstile; the hull train-crew was on the jump ter ditch us off. At each stop—an' thet fool rattler slowed up fer every water-tank an' cluster o' adobes—we was forced ter dodge about from cow-catcher to caboose an' run ahead till she swung inter high. Yuh knows it wasn't no fun on a hot night. An' the worst of it was it was so blamed bright an' moonlighty them brakies didn't need to carry no lanterns ter smell yer out, but could sneak up on yuh without a sound.

"I remimber at one water-tower I was purty near corralled between the engine-crew runnin' down from for'rd an' the shacks comin' up from the caboose. I crawled under a cattle-car as ef ter try the rods fer a change. But I was afeered the crew had seed me, which it toined out they hadn't, an' I kept goin', oncet I was under, until I climbed out t'other side. Jest as she started clackin' on I grabbed an iron ladder alongside and swung up an' decked her.

"But I didn't stay put on the top o' thet hoss-car; not me. I was afeered them shacks had glimmed me. I wint crawlin' for'rd an' was jest gonna dive to the nex' car ahead when I see'd yuh, the Finn Kid, ridin' down below between them two cars, yer legs spread out on the two bumpers. I don't know why I didn't holler ter yer, but mebbe it was 'cause I was so scared o' rousin' them shacks.

"The shacks must 'a' passed yer by, they was so hot arter me, and besides yer was so small an' shaddery—yuh was on'y 'bout fourteen at the time. I flattened out an' looked down at yer over the edge. An' all ter oncet I seed yuh take out from yer overalls pocket a iron couplin'-pin yuh must 'a' jest picked up at thet last stop, an' a piece o' cord yuh must 'a' got, I don't know wheres. But I couldn't 'a' hollered then ef yer paid me, 'cause I began ter git a awful hunch wot yer was up to.

"Yuh tied one end o' thet line to the eye in the couplin'-pin an' then yer paid it

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out, down between the bumpers till it was jouncin' about right beneath the rods of the car behind, where yuh thought I was ridin'. Back an' forth yuh paid it, lettin' the road-bed an' the speed o' thet rattler bounce it up 'n' down. I could hear it bangin' the wooden bottom o' thet cattle-car an' makin' all them hosses inside stamp an' snort with fright. Ef I was where yuh thought I was, ridin' them rods, it would 'a' sure mashed me to a quince jelly.

"Thet's how I sarves youse, Frisco Red, fer all the beatin' yuh've giv me!' I hearn yuh say. 'Take a little mashin' yerse'f, you lousy bum!'

"To my last day I'll never fergit yer words nor the cool way youse played with the line on thet bangin', smashin' couplin'-pin. It seems ter me now thet I glimpsed yer eyes, an' they was cold an' green an' kinder fishy. An' yer was on'y a little shadder o' a kid at the time!

"But me, I see'd the no-good badness was in yer an' I was hep yer sure was no road-kid fer me to be travelin' with chummy. At the nex' stop down I crawls real quiet-like from the top o' thet cattle-car an' without no last handshake nor *adios*, off I beats it as fast as I could hike from thet train an' youse."

IT WAS noticeable, as he finished, that the vizualization and recital of the uncouth incidents had had a sobering effect upon Frisco Red. He paused as if astounded at his own temerity in relating the story and studied Strong-Arm from under unkempt brows as if wondering with some dread just what the result would be on that personage.

Strong-Arm finished his drink in one long quaff.

"I remember now," he said, an alcoholic, malicious leer widening his gash of mouth. "And I remember too thet when, months later, I l'arned yuh was alive and kickin' an' hadn't been under thet hoss-car a-tall, I was so plumb disapp'inted I jist sat down an' bawled me eyes out."

"Aw, I wasn't so worser!" repeated Red almost plaintively. "Me, I was mighty sorry youse toined ag'in' me as yuh did. Yuh wouldn't 'a' fallen inter bad comp'ny an' been sent to the Ref to l'arn real badness, Strong-Arm, if youse had stuck to ol' Red. I tell yuh, I tuck to yuh like glue when youse was the Finn Kid an' my prushun——"

"Cut the bull, Red," savagely. "An' yuh needn't git so scared an' trembly. Me, I'm out arter bigger game than beatin' up an old whisky-soaked bum fur revenge. Remember the kid what used ter gawp at them soap-box orators? Well, he's trampin' out the Vintage o' the Lawd terday, Red, workin' fur the great Day o' Universal Brotherhood to come!"

There was a swift fanatical light in the greenish eyes of Strong-Arm.

"Ye're a funny bloke," said Red shakily. "Sometimes yuh spiel like a sky-pilot er a Galway. Yer ain't—yer ain't toined Salvationist, has yuh, Strong-Arm?"

In Red's quavering voice was strange hope.

The other swore. The alcohol he had imbibed seemed rather to have fretted than smoothed the natural bile in the man.

"Me, Strong-Arm, the Big Sab-Cat, out fer the choich, the product an' bulwark o' the System!"

He laughed harshly at the idea.

"I'll tell the cock-eyed world I ain't! I'm out for the One Big Union, the Greatest Thing on Earth, the Industrial Workers of the World!"

Something of drunken braggadocio had entered Strong-Arm. Red looked askance at him out of the ends of his small, piggy eyes.

"A Wobbly, Strong-Arm?"

"Sure, a Wobbly, an I. W. W., a carrier o' the red card thet will yet be the flag o' industrial freedom fer the world! There's no White Cat about me, no quick-limin' of the boots of scissor-bills what don't know enough about their own welfare to jine the Union, an' sech small sabotage as thet. I'm done even with the Black Cat stuff, the Big Sabotage of the Wobblies, with pencils of sulfate fur the hay-ricks in the sun and blocks o' phosphorus fer the wine-cellars an' munition plants an' places sech-like thet are a bit damp. Me, I'm the Avenging Angel o' the Wobblies!"

It was a dramatic statement. Frisco Red wet his dry stubbled lips.

"The Avengin' Angel o' the Wobblies!" he repeated in a thick whisper of awe. "Strong-Arm, wot's thet?"

Strong-Arm leaned closer to the blowsy, red-bearded hobo. His long, greenish eyes looked bloodshot in the dying firelight.

"Listen, Red," he confided. "The govamint is makin' up a list o' all the stool-pigeons in the Wobbly ranks. The idee is

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fer all the private detective agencies in the country to toin in the names of the snitches they has workin' amongst us. Yuh knows there is a number of stools—I seen some as high as secretaries of locals—an' they is usu'lly the wurst Reds of us all. They has ter be to keep their hands dark an' ward off suspicion. But they egg on the others an' then toin them in fur the rewards.

"The govamint knows this. It wants to hold down them stools somewhat, but mainly it wants ter be able to put its finger on the snitches whenever anything starts in any part of the country. Then the snitches kin toin up the real Reds.

"Now somewheres there's a list of them stools bein' made up. Thet's what I'm workin' on. I wanta git hold of thet list.

"Doublin' Bob—yuh know, the old near-sighted chemist an' bomb-maker o' the Wobblies—holds thet the list ain't in the headquarters o' the Secret Sarvice in Washington. He says thet somewheres, in some town like Orleans or St. Louie, far from Washington, there is some quiet slick old man livin' alone. A secret agent, but nobody knows thet, not even his sarvant, an' nobody visits him. He don't receive no telegrams nor letters. But every mornin' he comes out to his front door an' picks up the bottle o' milk an' the mornin' paper waitin' outside on the porch. Inside thet paper, within the wrapper, Doublin' Bob claims, there is sometimes a number o' names to be added to the list of snitches. The old man is makin' up an' in persession of the entire list. Thet's Doublin' Bob's idee.

"But me, I don't put much stock in thet. I believe there is a safe somewheres, mebby in Washington itself in the very inner rooms o' the Secret Sarvice—a safe containin' the names of all them stools—a safe to crack.

"And I got the man ter do the job! Red, d'yuh know this zebra what escaped from Joliet? He's one of the two slickest petermen in the hull country. Me, Strong-Arm, ingineered his gitaway from stir!"

"Youse, Strong-Arm!" gasped Red.

"Yes, me. An' the hull Wobbly crew is behind me. This escaped gun is the little old sandpaper-fingered boy what'll break the keester fur me and git them names. Once I put hands on them names, Red, won't there be a cleanin' in the House o' the Wobblies!"

Strong-Arm's muddy-complexioned face was flushed with passion; his red-tinged greenish eyes were glowing wildly.

"It'll be work to do, Frisco Red—cold, bloody, nasty work! But the House o' the Wobblies must be swept clean o' all them blood-fattened spiders an' their dirty webs. Strong-Arm, the Black Finn, the Big Sab-Cat o' the Wobblies, has elected hisself ter be the Avenging Angel o' the Cause. Direct action, Red; direct action!"

CHAPTER XII

A DISCOVERY

TO RETURN to the Frisco Kid. Hanging round Bigley's Circus through the day, the Kid had learned considerable about Gipsy Frank's mob and inferred from that a deal more. He felt sure that Anzac Pete, the ticket-butcher, was the third member of the mob. If there were any others they were undoubtedly side-show grifters also.

As side-show workers the men must attend to their ostensible business at peculiar but certain hours. It was a rule of Old Man Bigley that the kid shows should not distract trade from the bigger show. They must ballyhoo and draw the crowds whenever the main tent was empty and dead, and discontinue operations entirely whenever the performance was going forward in the Big Top.

Therefore Gipsy Frank, as ballyhoo man, and Anzac Pete, as ticket-seller, would not be released from work until the main performance started at eight o'clock. They would have to return at eleven, when the feature show was over. Between the hours of eight and eleven while off duty they must pull their burglarious attempt. It was the best time of the day at that, for always during those hours, in whatever town or countryside they showed, the inhabitants and guardians of the spotted houses and banks were engrossed in enjoying the popcorn and blaring trombones and spangles under the Big Top.

One thing the Kid dearly wished, and that was that he might originate some dodge whereby he could shoo Miss Heffernan safely away from the house before the time when Gipsy Frank and his mob were due to attempt the burglary. He didn't trust the yeggmen. He cared not to picture the rough treatment they might mete out to the sweet old lady should some outburst

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upon her part excite or otherwise arouse them.

A clock, towering above the composite town hall and lock-up, boomed out the hour of seven as the Frisco Kid, leaving the circus lot behind, went through the straggling village of Middletown. He counted the deliberate strokes with an increasing frown and a panicky sinking feeling. Seven o'clock already! He quickened his step and called to the Gay-Cat to hurry.

Perhaps it was seeing the village lock-up which made him think for one brief instant of informing the Middletown constable that the house on the hill was to be robbed that very night—within two hours by his strict computation. But the Kid was a true hobo. Hobo ideals were his ideals; and hobo ideals are strange ideals. He had all the true hobo's dislike and fear of the forces of the law, and to work in with those hated forces by informing the constable savored too much of peaching on his own kind, of acting the despicable stool-pigeon.

Besides he had all the sneering contempt of a blown-in-the-glass stiff for countryside police officers and rural guardians of the law. In his eyes constables, sheriffs, country judges and such ilk were ludicrous, blundering bumpkins, wearing horse-blinders, and grass-green in all the larger wisdom of the world. What use to tell that sort the burglarious plan of such resourceful criminals as Gipsy Frank and Anzac Pete? Better to trust to his own powers of ingenuity to put one over on Gipsy Frank and company.

Besetting his wits for a dodge by which to trip up the crooks, the Frisco Kid mounted the rise of hill toward the rambling former road-house among its kennels and yew hedges. What a surprize! Coming down the slope with hurried, tiny steps, he saw the small, spare figure of Miss Heffernan clad in her going-out clothes—a rusty black silk of an old-fashioned pattern and antique basque effect, and a black, snug little bonnet. She seemed out of breath, what with her quick-step haste, and altogether astounded at seeing him.

"Oh, lan'!" she gasped. "I raikened I never should see you ag'in. I thought you had up in the dead of night and left me for good and all."

"Aw, say, Miss Heffernan! Aw, say now, ma'am; I wouldn't take no run-out powders on yer that way. I jes' was a-hangin, round the circus all day, that's all."

"The circus? Oh, to be sure. I had forgot it was here today. But I'm so all over nervous and excited I don't know jest what I am a-doing."

"Has Jerrold showed up then?"

"No; more's the pity."

She shook her black-bonneted head.

"But I jest had word that pore old Selina, who has been with me these long thirty year, is very low and sinking fast. It were the influenzy she had 'stead of the grippe, though she never called it anything but jest the plain miseries; and naow her little black gran'son says as it's turned into the double pneumony.

"Pore soul, what shall I do without her? Sech a help in raisin' my thoroughbreds, she was; and the elegantest cook! She should 'a' been born white!

"But you go on up to the house, child, and don't mind me being gone a little. You'll find some cold meat laid out for you in the pantry and some jelly for your bread. There's an apple-cooker, too, that I baked myself this morning 'case you really did come back to me.

"Help yourself, child, and go to bed at nine like a good boy, and don't set up for me 'cause I may be gone all night. I'll stay with Selina to the last, pore soul!"

Not mind her being gone! And this after he had wracked his brain all the way from the circus lot to devise a plan whereby to get her safely out of the house! He could hardly resist a great whoopee of glad relief right in her troubled face. Decidedly the first round belonged to the Frisco Kid.

She was watching him in a hesitant, nervous manner.

"Anythin' else, ma'am?"

"Well, if any one comes—you know, if Jerrold comes—you give him the suit you promised me you'd let him have, and tuck him out of sight up in your room in the attic. Or better, here's the key to what was once the barroom of the house when it was the old South End Inn. I use that barroom naow for a lumber and odds-and-ends room. You stow him in there and lock the door all snug-like. I'll be back jest as soon as I possibly can."

She handed him the key and then was off down the hill in a little quick-step run. The Kid whistled to the dog. He felt wildly elated that Miss Heffernan was

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out of the house for the evening. Had not Frisco Red given Gipsy Frank the word to carry a gun? The Frisco Kid feared violence. He feared lest in some resentful or panicky moment the strong-arm men might harm or even kill the sweet old lady. How he himself might be treated, alone with them in the rambling house, he did not care to think.

HE FOUND the screen door in the rear unlocked. He went through the kitchen into the dining-room. It was an immense room with high, dark wainscoting and a large open fireplace in one side, set with old-fashioned massive. andirons. There was a lonely small table in the center, draped over with a red cambric cover.

He went into the pantry between kitchen and dining-room. On a cleared space of shelf, where food had been set out, he found dismaying signs. The platter had been swept almost bare of cold meat; the bottle of milk was empty; and there were crumbs of bread and apple-cake, and dabs of jelly all over the frilled oilcloth-covering of the shelf.

He recalled Miss Heffernan's words. The meat and bread, milk and cake and jelly had been set out expressly for him. He knew then. Since Miss Heffernan had left the house, only a short while before, some one had been here and had eaten. He looked quickly and a little fearfully about.

"Who can it 'a' been?" he asked himself. "Jerrold? Frisco Red?"

Remembrance of the latter made the Frisco Kid hurry back to the kitchen, place a chair against the wall and, standing a-tiptoe upon it, open the frosted face of the pendulum box of the clock to ascertain whether the money still was there, if it ever had been there. Surely enough therein in a compact bundle of ten one-hundred-dollar bills was the one thousand dollars.

The Kid returned the money and swung shut the frosted face. As he stepped down to the clean white flooring he suddenly remembered having noticed, tagging out of the top of the flour-bin in the pantry, a dirty-looking inch of white cloth, like a soiled shirt cuff. It struck him, now, what an unsanitary and incongruous place the flour-bin was wherein to secrete soiled garments. He resolved at once to investigate.

The flour-bin pulled out easily on pivots on either side of the bottom. Within was a flour-whitened roll of clothing. The Kid picked at the garments gingerly, lifting them out one at a time, the flour in which they were smothered whitening his hands and the front of his Fauntleroy garb. There were two garments of coarse material, a jumper and trousers. Across the breast of the blouse was stenciled in large black figures the number 7292. They were the black-striped shoddy garments of a convict.

"A zebra suit!" breathed the Kid in a cold whisper of awe. "Gee, it must 'a' been Jerrold!"

He saw that one of his own suits, drying behind the range, was missing. It was the suit Strong-Arm had given in his charge. It was that suit intended for Jerrold.

"Well, if it *is* Jerrold everything's jake. But I wonder where he's gone to. Has he flown the coop, or is he still hidin' about som'eres?"

CHAPTER XIII

FRISCO RED DRIVES A BARGAIN

THE boy, Chick, came slowly through the thickening twilight from the direction of Bedford. Down in the gully, in the flickering red glow from the embers of the puny fire, Frisco Red was moving about, pouring the remainder of the coffee in the lard-tin and the alcohol in the flask into the two tomato-cans which served as cups. Strong-Arm, half-reclining on one elbow upon the folded serge coat, was watching the older hobo with brooding thoughtfulness. The boy came close to his enslaver and wordlessly held out to him a small newspaper-wrapped parcel.

"Is thet all?" bit out the man, sitting up.

Frisco Red swung about his bloated, red-stubbled face and looked at the bare-legged urchin, a tomato-can poised in one hand. Chick lifted the bottom of the faded red sweater where it bulged in front and, twisting one dirty little hand underneath, produced several bulky paper-wrapped packages. Partially unwrapping the treasures, Strong-Arm placed them before him upon the grass. He seemed to perk up a bit in spirit.

"The eats is on me, Frisco Red!" he exclaimed. "Yuh got a setdown, didn't yuh, Chick? I thought so—youse allus fares better'n me. Well, Red, there's

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enough fur two, an' yuh kin take yer pick—beef sandwiches, egg er bacon sandwiches an' a hunk o' angel cake. There's no reason why we should live on jamocha royal alone when we kin be cap'talists an' exploit the beggin' ability o' a kid like Chick. It's the System o' the World, on'y on a smaller scale."

Red's free hand, thick with sun-hairs, reached out for a sandwich; but his eyes remained fixed in peculiar scrutiny upon the puny boy. He took a noisy swallow of the brownish admixture, tore off a huge chunk of sandwich and then, his mouth filled and widely chewing, he mumbled:

"Thet's some kid youse got there, thet Chick. Looket thet mess o' eats—sand'-iches enough fer a dozen an' variety fit fer a kink! An' here I've been livin' on nothin' but java fer the larst two days 'cause I dassent poke my nose near the screen door of a single solitary farmhouse. I tell yuh, Strong-Arm, I'm plumb leary o' bein' shot in the back by some o' them rubes with shotguns wot mistakes me fer thet escaped con——"

"I know," agreed Strong-Arm thoughtfully. "I came near gittin' vagged myself jist afore I boarded thet train down south. Thet yegg wot I helped make his getaway from Joliet sure has stirred up this hick country. It's pretty bad, all right."

"Bad?" munched Red thickly. "I tell yuh this is no-good country fer boes the likes o' me. Why, I'm thet scared I'm throwin' up a fat job wot I cottoned to with Bigley's Circus on'y a short time ergo, and which I allowed I'd never pass up till I croaked, it was so soft an' easy. Ternight I'm takin' my walkin'-papers o' me own accord, an' I'm leavin' fer parts safer fer my kind, a few links from Illinois. I'm on'y lingerin' hereabouts ter git my divvy o' a little deal wot I pulled as a side line to the bill-stickin' spiel."

"What was it—crackin' the keester of a village bank or jist plain house-breakin'?" asked Strong-Arm wisely.

"Well, I ain't tellin' everybody, but youse bein' an ol' friend——"

"Aw, I don't care nothin' 'bout it!" broke in Strong-Arm as if incensed at the fellow's boast of friendship. "If ye're doin' gunwork keep it to yerself. On'y I didn't think youse had the guts ter play the yegg. Me, I'm off gunwork fer good."

"'nd so youse kin!" exclaimed Frisco Red, not only strangely undaunted by the other's show of anger, but even with something of elation in his voice as if he had gained a point in the discussion. "So youse kin, Strong-Arm. Say, youse ain't got no kick comin' at all, even in this horstile neck o' the woods. A fat an' soft life youse kin lead ennywheres with a swell beggin'-kid like Chick along. A lazy, easy life wot beats all-holler bill-postin' er even gay-cattin' fer a bunch o' circus sharpers!"

He leaned toward Strong-Arm, his small piggy eyes dull and smoky with inordinate desire, his bulbous face working with eagerness.

"Say, Strong-Arm, yuh don't wanter sell thet prushun, does youse? Me, I'd give three dollars fer him—I'd give anything I got fer ter own a wis'ful beggar-kid like him, now!"

"Feed yer face 'n' shut up!" snapped the Wobbly. "The kid ain't fer sale. He's too babyish 'n' scary a sort, spineless as a white rabbit. He'd go plumb bughouse ef I sold him ter youse, Red—yuh've got such an ugly mug."

The blowsy older hobo affected to be surprized and deeply mortified.

"Aw, he don't need ter be frighted o' me, Strong-Arm," he fawned. "A kid wot's a good beggar has a soft time with ol' Red. Youse knows me, Strong-Arm. I'm too lazy o' nature to be real orn'ary. 'Fact, I'm a kinder tender hand with kids."

Strong-Arm studied the fellow with narrowed, green eyes. He seemed astounded by his blunt effrontery, even hotly indignant. Yet as he spoke his voice was cold:

"Frisco Red, I knows yuh. I knows yuh too —— well. An' I'm tellin' yuh somethin'. Chick ain't fur sale."

The food he had eaten steadied Strong-Arm, though his brain still worked rapidly with the after effects of the pure and potent alcohol. He turned to the boy with sudden thought.

The little fellow had seated himself in the disheveled grass a space away from the two men. He was making for himself a cigaret from his own sheaf of papers and small muslin sack of tobacco. Throughout the conversation he had not looked up, but it was noticeable now as he rolled the paper tube that his dirty little fingers were trembling.

"Chick," said Strong-Arm, "did yuh

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see any sign of him—either him or his dawg?"

The head that was hatless and of the color of straw snapped up. Chick shook his head.

"No, Strong-Arm," he gulped. "Notta sign."

And he bowed his head swiftly over the engrossing cigaret. He had not once looked at Frisco Red.

That personage, meanwhile, had showed quick interest at the mention of the word, "dawg." Now with a bovine attempt at off-handedness he said:

"Who yer lookin' fer, Strong-Arm? Yuh can't be any chance mean the Frisco Kid an' his dorg, Gay-Cat."

Strong-Arm's black, distinctly haired brows lifted in stupefaction.

"How'd yuh know, Red? Who tole' yuh?"

His muddy face darkened, and he snarled—

"Has thet kid peached?"

Red chuckled at the other's swift emotion.

"I ain't sech a bad C. O. Dick; wot yuh think, Strong-Arm? No, the Kid never said nothin' to me. I guess he wouldn't anyways 'cause he used ter be me prushun a coupla months ergo an' there ain't much love lost between us. I jest jedged who youse was arter when yer happens to mention the dorg. Whenever anybody says, 'Dorg' to me I thinks immedjit o' the Frisco Kid an' his dern yeller cur, Gay-Cat."

"Used ter be yer prushun, eh?" repeated Strong-Arm significantly. "Say, Red, what have yuh got ag'inst him? Has he played yer fer a sucker? Tell me, Red; what d'yuh know about the Frisco Kid?"

"Know about him?" iterated Red vehemently. "Why, I got the hull low-down on thet Kid! I've been right on his heels sence thet night he met up with youse, two evenin's ergo, in The Willows."

STRONG-ARM exhibited sharpened interest.

"Say, Red, what's he been doin'?"

"Well, when he left The Willows he hit straight fer Miss Heffernan's house on the hill back o' Middletown, fourteen mile below here. Yuh hearn tell o' Miss Heffernan, Strong-Arm?"

"Oh, sure. She keeps a clearin'-house fer boes." The Wobbly was watching the older hobo closely, eager for his every word.

"But it's road-kids she's real sweet on," Red resumed. "Well, I ditched the poster wagon an' Sammy, the gay-cat wot drives, in Middletown an' ambled up there about supper-time. This Miss Heffernan dame, she comes to the screen door in the back an' says—

" 'Ye're not Jerrold, is youse now?' Me, I didn't know wot ter make of it an' opens my mouth like a dummy, gittin' a swaller o' rain thet made me cough. An' then I thinks mebbe it was a stall er somethin', so I says:

" 'Naw, I ain't Jerrold, mum, but I'm Jerry all right, ef thet's wot yuh mean, 'cause I sure knows this is the right place ter come fer a setdown.'

"She gives a shrilly yelp an' pulls open the door like she was gonna throw herself at me neck.

"But she lamps me auburn mug all to oncet an' draws back sudden, like I was a rattler.

" 'I thought youse said yuh was Jerrold an' was comin' to the right place,' she says, real disapp'inted-like. 'Wot does yuh mean? Youse can't deceive eyes as good as mine, Mister Man. Youse don't look like my neffee Jerrold one little bit!'

"I thought she'd shoo me away quick, so I tries to explain thet I meant on'y I was Jerry—Johnny Hep; wise, yuh know.

" 'Well, I'll give yuh somethin' to eat,' she sighs, 'but I don't mind tellin' yer thet youse give me the fright o' me life, 'cause I was expectin' my neffee Jerrold wot run away——' "

"She said thet—she was expectin' her neffee Jerrold?"

Strong-Arm's muddy-complexioned face flushed darkly with some great inward excitement.

"Sure; an' she says the same to the Frisco Kid when he drills along later. Say, wot ails yuh, Strong-Arm? Youse don't know this bloky Jerrold, does yuh?"

"Shut yer old cow-face! This ain't none o' yer bus'ness. Jist yuh tell me this an' tell it straight: Did the Frisco Kid meet up with Jerrold?"

"How do I know? Thet Kid scared me off afore Jerrold arrived home. Yuh see, it was this way: Miss Heffernan, she had a thousand bucks hidden cold in her kitchen clock, an' I wanted the Frisco Kid ter come in on the job an' help me, and I'd split

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fifty-fifty. O' course I never meant ter split with him——"

"And he knew thet right off, yuh bet. I see now why youse loves him, Red. Thet Frisco Kid ain't no dummy be any means."

Frisco Red turned to Strong-Arm, a ludicrous expression of woful dismay etched on his bloated, red-stubbled face.

"Was — was thet why he toined me down?" he gulped. "Here I been stewin' about thet all day, worryin' my fool head off ter explain why he wouldn't come in with me. So that's the reason! The foxy varmint, the slick little gunsel! Why, he was plannin' all the time ter rob her hisself, an' tellin' me bold as brass an' lookin' straight up at me honest-eyed as a preacher:

" 'No, Red, I'se too leary. I'm scared ter try ut. She says Jerrold will be home ternight, in a coupla hours, an' Jerrold's a big fat——' "

Strong-Arm reached over abruptly and got Red by one thick, hair-coated wrist.

"Red!" he cried. "Did he say thet—thet Jerrold would be to home in a coupla hours? Yuh sure the Frisco Kid wasn't stallin'?"

"Aw, lay off the rough stuff; will yuh, Strong-Arm. My arm ain't no iron pipe. I'll cough up—yuh don't have ter force me. Thanks, Strong-Arm."

And Red nursed his released but crushed wrist.

"Aw, youse is too excitable a guy fer me, Strong-Arm," he complained petulantly. "Why git so riled up? Yuh'd think youse was this Jerrold bloky yerself."

"Spiel!" snapped the Wobbly. "Come on; shoot what yuh knows. Was thet Kid stallin'?"

"Gee, Strong-Arm, ol'-timer, thet's jest wot's a-botherin' me. It struck me like a bu'st o' lightnin' a while back when I put the java on—mebbe thet Kid *was* lyin' jest ter scare me off an' nab all the swag hisself."

"But ye're not sure, sartain! Supposin' he warn't lyin'—did he meet up with Jerrold? Did Jerrold arrive to home last night? Did yuh see him? Did the Kid continue on this mornin'? What——"

"Hold up a momint, Strong-Arm. I can't answer all them custions. I don't know nothin' more'n wot I tole youse. Me, I ain't never seed this Jerrold guy. I don't know who the stiff is ner wot it's all about. I got skeered off too soon, I tell yuh, by thet —— Frisco Kid."

Strong-Arm gave vent to his disappointment in a vile oath.

"Aw, I thought yuh said youse knowed all about the Frisco Kid," he ended angrily.

Abruptly he fell silent, looking into the graying embers with morose thoughtfulness. Red watched him for an appreciable interval, then turned round to view once again the boy who sat and smoked some distance apart from the men. Presently Strong-Arm raised his head and in his wonted passionate manner burst out:

"Devil take all these Johnny Tinplates an' sheriff posses an' rubes with shotguns thet are gone offn their nuts 'cause a single lonely loser escaped from stir! I jist gotta move round this country on a little bus'ness—I wanta git down Middletown way an' see jist what thet Frisco Kid's done—an' I can't fer fear o' gittin' nabbed as a suspicious character. —— all these scared forces o' the law!"

"Youse got a little bus'ness hereabouts?" questioned Red with strange eagerness. "Yuh'd like ter nosey round Middletown quiet-like 'n' not git nabbed?"

In his small, piggy eyes there was a peculiar look, a wise, calculating look.

"Yuh heard me, didn't yuh?" snapped Strong-Arm with morose surliness. "But what kin I do—a sab-cat fur the Wobblies with a record fer wise work an' certain results? Me git by these minions o' the law in these days when they're so leary of Bolshevism spreadin' over here an' with them partic'lar wild over this zebra hidin' somewhere's about? No, I can't risk gittin' vagged an' then rekernized from them private dick dodgers. Not me of all men. With me railroaded on some fake charge who's gonna clean house fur us? Who'll be the Avenging Angel o' the Wobblies? No, it's too risky; I got too much work to do fer the Cause! I'll have to grab the next south-bound rattler an' git outa here ternight."

"Say, Strong-Arm," began Red suddenly.

"What? What d'yuh want?"

"I got it, Strong-Arm. I was gonna offer yuh three dollars ag'in as an inducemint ter sell Chick ter me, but I jest thought o' somethin' better'n a three dollars, better'n three hundert dollars!"

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HE LEANED toward the Direct Actionist with an air of great secrecy.

"It's a paper, Strong-Arm. Thet paper will make yer glad ter sell Chick ter me, an' it'll git youse around this country jake 'n' fast, an' with no danger a-tall from the perlice an' sheriff's men. It'll make them take off their hats to yuh an' pass youse on like a hot pertater. Youse kin go to Middletown an' see Miss Heffernan an' find out all about the Frisco Kid, an' no trouble——"

"Let's see it," interrupted Strong-Arm. "Quick, Red. What paper you got?"

Red rose to his feet.

"Git off thet coat a momint, Strong-Arm," he said.

His request complied with, he lifted the serge and fished in an inside pocket. He drew out a folded sheet of heavy writing-paper. Spreading this out between dirty-gnarled fingers, in the halting voice of a schoolboy in his second reader he began slowly reading what was written therein:

" 'Warden's Office, State Penitentiary, Joliet, Illinois.' Thet's the headin', Strong-Arm."

"Go ahead, man!" exclaimed Strong-Arm, getting to his feet with excitement and coming up behind Red. "Who's it addressed to?"

" 'Mr. Jarge Kummer, Sheriff o' Middlesex County, Middletown. Dear Kummer:—This is ter introduce to yuh Abraham Powers, who has been employed as a guard at this prison fer the last seven years an' who knows the escaped convict, Number 7292——' "

Strong-Arm snatched the paper from him. He could no longer wait, in his agitation, on the other's halting rendition. With eyes far more accustomed to the printed page he read the letter quickly to himself.

"Why, this is jist the thing! Fine!" he ejaculated after he had done. "Evidently Sheriff Kummer asked the warden fer the assistance of some one what could identify the escaped zebra at sight, an' the warden sent along this man, Powers. Lissen to this, Red."

Strong-Arm read aloud:

" 'I hope now, with the aid of Powers, yuh will be able to capture our man and secure fur yerself the $1,000 reward offered by the State as well as the standin' reward of the American Bankers' Association. The escape, yuh know, is a notorious safe-cracker.' "

He looked up at Red with sudden wonder and suspicion.

"Say, old-timer, however did yuh come to git yer hands on this paper? Why, this is valu'ble!"

The blowsy, slouch-shouldered hobo fidgeted from one foot to the other. But he felt rather proud of himself. He said:

"Well, me an' a Gipsy name o' Louis Lees met up on the road below here around noon terday an' wint inter the Six-Mile House to git a beer an' transack tergether a little matter o' private bus'ness. Whilst we was havin' the second schooner o' suds, in blows a guy wot has shed his coat, account o' the heat, an' is wearin' on'y a white west-cut with a big gold chain acrosst. He is a large, pink-faced, comfor'ble-lookin' *hombre*. We gives him a good day, at which he invites us ter have a drink, not likin' ter drink alone.

"We has beer an' he has red-eye. I was some su'prized when Lees buys another all around. But when I treated, as in dooty bound, I begins ter gather, 'cause the Gipsy gives me the office, an' then dopes the baby-faced gent's whisky whilst the barkeep ain't lookin' an' the big feller is busy gassin' with me.

"Thet dope in the forty-rod hits him all ter oncet. He begins rollin' round on his legs an' talkin' like a crazy loon. Says as how his rig's outside at the hitchin-post, an' thet he's driven down all the way from Joliet an' has ter make Middletown thet night. We helps him out real friendly-like to the little Summer shack outside an' leaves him sleepin' peaceful as a infant.

"Lees gits his gold watch an' heavy chain, and then we jumps inter the buggy an' hits it out south. Lees is happy as a clam in high water. He says the baby-faced guy won't wake up till the middle o' the nex' day. He tells me how he plans to dope up thet buggy with a new coat o' paint an' fix the hoss with a pair o' shears an' a brandin'-iron so yuh couldn't rekernize neither of them. But me, I don't like this hoss-stealin' stunt nohow, knowin' it's a prison offense, an' I says the same ter Lees.

"He's none displeased, Lees ain't, bein' a Gipsy an' thinkin' nothin' o' stealin' hosses an' sech. Besides, he sees the chance o' not havin' ter divide with me the profits

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o' the rig. I takes as my divvy the feller's coat, a new serge wot he had left in the rig 'count o' the heat. Thet's it wot yuh've been settin' on, Strong-Arm. I likes thet better 'cause it's on'y petty larceny. Lees goes south with the rig an' I hops off an' comes by a roundabout way up here. I finds three dollars in bills in the coat an' this paper——"

"It's jist the thing, Red; jist the thing I needs. I kin go anywheres with this—to Middletown, Miss Heffernan's, anywheres. And the sheriff will be back of me, behind all my actions, every move. It's fine, Red; jist the thing!"

Red looked at him with bright, furtive eyes.

"An' yuh'll sell Chick fer thet paper; wot, Strong-Arm?"

Strong-Arm stepped back in a complete surprize, as if he had not heard the idea broached before. There, in the grass-disheveled gully, in the fire-tinged dusk, the two hoboes looked long at one another. Hungry hope, smoky desire, and a deal of craven fear crowded Red's piggy eyes, Strong-Arm's face grew arrogant with contempt, his eyes mere greenish slits. Quietly he folded the paper and shoved it into an inner coat pocket.

Red's small eyes moved with mechanical jerkiness. They watched Strong-Arm stealthily a trice, darted away and then came furtively back again. He feared that Strong-Arm would say him nay and pocket the letter without payment of any kind. What could he do then?

But suddenly Strong-Arm smiled, an odd smile for that brutal, unfinished-looking gash of mouth, a peculiar cat-and-mouse smile. He nodded his head as if in answer to some unspoken thought.

"Well, seein' thet's the barg'in," he said with wooden lips, "yuh kin take Chick, Red; I'll take the paper. It's a go. I'll stand by the deal."

CHAPTER XIV

AND PAYS THE PRICE

THE bare-legged boy, Chick, gave an incoherent scream, leaped afoot and, rushing to Strong-Arm, clung with tiny dirty fingers to his coat-ends. His pouting, baby lips quivered; the welt across little nose and cheeks glowed scarlet against the ghastly pallor of his face. Stretching wide the baby-blue eyes was such terror as to turn one sick, an inconceivable terror, full of vague but grisly horrors. Frantically, in the thin sexless voice of a child, he begged not to be sold.

Roughly Strong-Arm cast him off. But when he spoke there was not so much anger at the boy in his voice. It was almost as if such resentment as he felt were directed against himself for having been roped into such a despicable bargain. He said not unkindly:

"Chick boy, don't yuh want me ter sell youse to this bo, Frisco Red? He's a old-timer, Chick. He's over forty, an' he's growin' weaker every day with booze 'n' laziness. His hand ain't as strong as mine fer beatin's, Chick."

"Aw, Strong-Arm!" pleaded the child, rushing to him again and tearing distractedly at his coat-tails. "Aw, please, please, Strong-Arm, don't sell me to him. He's too—too bad-lookin'."

It was a wail of poignant terror. The boy shuddered away from the bulbous-nosed Red with squirmings of unspeakable loathing. He had no love for Strong-Arm, but Strong-Arm he knew to his most brutal depths. This old, bloated-faced, altogether disreputable-looking hobo he did not know. He feared in Frisco Red depths of cruelty to which the harsh, tempestuous but clean brutality of Strong-Arm might be as nothing.

Strong-Arm laughed bitterly.

"Youse see, Red. He's kinder sweet on me—me bein' thet good-lookin' an' so thoughtful of his needs."

Red fawned.

"Aw, he don't need ter be frighted o' me. I knows I got a hard an' onhandsome mug—I scares the farmers' wives at the screen doors all the time—but I got a big heart. Youse knows me, Strong-Arm."

And he winked at the other over the wailing, clinging boy.

"I'm a tender hand with kids. Why, I wouldn't think o' liftin' my fist to a child."

There was that in Frisco Red's words which exasperated Strong-Arm. He shoved the clinging boy from him. The little fellow staggered dizzily; the trembling, red-welted pipestems of legs gave suddenly, and he fell on his face in the grass, weeping desperately, torrentially. The Wobbly turned on the older hobo.

"G'wan, Red!" he growled savagely.

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"Take the kid. I'm done. He's yourn."

Red advanced with a proprietary air upon the wailing boy, smirking complacently.

"Thet's talkin', Strong-Arm. I jest knowed yuh was a stiff arter me own heart."

The boy lifted his straw-colored head. He saw Red coming toward him, the satisfied grimace on Red's bloated face. He shrieked despairingly, lifted to his knees and scrambled hurriedly toward Strong-Arm.

"Aw, Strong-Arm!" he wailed. "Fer Gawd's sake, Strong-Arm!"

The hairy paw of Frisco Red clapped down on the boy's shoulder and brought the frantic crawl to a stop.

"Yuh will, will youse! Run away from Red, eh? Well, I'm yer new jocker now, an' I'll soon l'arn youse wot's wot. Quick, git to yuh feet, er —— yer hide I'll lick the daylights outa yer."

Red's fingers dug into the cringing flesh of the boy's frail shoulder. He made to lift the child bodily by the shoulder to his feet. He felt all at once a heavy hand upon his own slouch shoulder. With an unusual and vehement show of anger, an aroused righteousness, Red released the boy, snapped erect and swung about.

Frisco Red looked into the eyes of Strong-Arm, not three inches from his own. He could see the veins standing out, blue and swollen, on Strong-Arm's quivering, dark-flushed temples. He became on the instant servile, abject, cringing.

The eyes of Strong-Arm held him as in a spell. Those eyes were like deep green pools rived by a fury of lightning.

"Yuh've guessed it," said Strong-Arm coldly between set, wooden lips. "The barg'in's made an' I'll stick by it; but, Red, I owes youse somethin' else, somethin' more. Yuh reminded me of it yerself, Red. Yer hand on Chick's shoulder, yer last words. I owes youse somethin' fur all the beatin's yuh gave me when I was on'y a kid like Chick. Yuh made my life one hell o' misery; yuh had no mercy on me; an' I'll have no mercy on youse now!"

Under the heavy hand on his shoulder Frisco Red shook like a wet dog.

"Gawd, Strong-Arm!" he cried. "Yuh don't mean——"

A harsh fist crashing against his jaw stopped the cry, mashed his lips, filled his mouth with teeth and blood. He reeled away, spitting out teeth as if they were seeds. His right hand whipped round to a hip pocket. When that hand came back a razor glistened in the dull play of firelight. That razor was opened and doubled up backwards in the crotch between thumb and forefinger.

Strong-Arm saw Red's move. But he did not reach for the revolver hanging in the shoulder-holster under his left arm. Altogether contemptuous of Red's vicious weapon he advanced on the man with unswerving intensity of purpose, with grim certitude.

All at once, his muscles tight, Strong-Arm bounded from the ground, fanged out one long arm and grasped the wrist that held the weapon. It was the leap of the panther, quick, not to be resisted. Strong-Arm's stubby, strong fingers closed like steel pincers about Red's wrist; there was a sharp snap; the razor dropped from Red's hand like a hot coal and that hand fell to his side, loose, inert and useless. Frisco Red had paid for his perfidy. The ulna bone was broken. In the sudden darting agony of the shattered wrist Red screamed hysterically.

The blood mania was seething in Strong-Arm. Boy and man, he had been brewing venom in his veins against this old, brutish taskmaster. The sweaty contact of struggling bodies, the fleshy thud of blows, the treachery and screaming of Red stirred up all the poisonous rancor within him, intensified his lusting haste. His knotted fists shot out like barbed pistons and hammered mercilessly the quivering stomach, heaving torso and messy face of his old master.

FRISCO RED could not see. There were folds of discolored flesh swelling over the sockets of his small eyes. Crouched, one arm covering his face, he backed down the gully toward the reed-overgrown creek, the breath wheezing asthmatically through his lungs.

He stumbled, his leaden legs entangled in the reeds of the shallow creek. His mind, as he felt himself slipping, blazed up with a grisly fear. He feared the *coup de grâce* of the Road, that dread stamping and finishing act—the boots of Strong-Arm. He forgot the excruciating pain of his broken wrist to clutch wildly with both hands at the air. He screamed bestially, hideously—the yelp of a stricken animal being dragged down to the kill.

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The scream was choked off; his head rocked loosely on his neck and his whole frame shuddered convulsively under a swift, deadly blow from Strong-Arm. He fell with a loud splash, broken and senseless, into the water. And the clatter of the creek sounded suddenly and preternaturally loud as it eddied about his still form.

Strong-Arm, well-nigh unmarked, the muscles outstanding on his short, thick neck, the knuckles of his right hand lacerated and bleeding where they had impacted against the teeth of Frisco Red, kicked the inert body, spraying up the shallow water. His lips were twisted with savage glee; in his long, greenish eyes burned fiercely an unholy triumph. Never had he performed a more complete man-breaking.

"I've broke yuh, Red," he panted, looking down at the result of his handiwork. "When I was yer beggin'-kid years ago I longed fer some one ter do this to yuh, but no one never did. But yuh got yers now, Red—yuh got yers now."

He turned to Chick, who had been standing aside and watching it all with a thorough comprehension but in protean terror. He reached beneath his left armpit; there was the snap of the springy whalebone of the shoulder-holster; and out in his blood-damp hand gleamed the steely revolver. Into Chick's astounded and fearfully hesitant fingers he forced the weapon.

"Take this," he snapped imperiously. "Yuh is Red's road-kid now, Chick. He done me a good toin with thet letter, so I won't go back on me barg'in with him. But I ain't through with him yit. I can't myself git paymint in full fer the way he used me when I was a measly kid. Youse seed me do what I could—manhandle him. He deserves more, much worse. But I can't cook him myself. He's too spineless, leary, yaller. He won't fight back, an' I can't croak him in cold blood.

"But youse, Chick boy, youse is elected by me ter pay him back in full. Yer weak an' scary o' yer own shadder, spineless as a white rabbit; but ye're a kid, an' it's a little 'fraid kid what should kill Frisco Red. It's me dream, Chick, me old dream o' vengeance thet I had when I was his prushun, years ago.

"Listen, Chick. Ye're to stick with Red an' be his beggin'-kid; ye're not to leave him till he's done fer. But at the first kick or blow from him ye're to pull this stick-up gun an' cook him good.

"Them's my orders, Chick. Fail me in this, leave him before thet time, come back ter me 'n' try to beg off, and I'll croak yuh myself as sure as me name's Strong-Arm. Yuh got them orders, Chick?"

"Y-yes, Strong-Arm."

Strong-Arm turned thereat and moved slowly away, going toward town. He was protected and armed by that paper he had secured from Frisco Red—the letter to Sheriff George Kummer from the warden of Joliet—and he feared no longer the sheriff's deputies, roadside guardians with shotguns, or any other forces of the aroused law.

Long after he had gone the little bare-legged Chick stood as he had been at the cruel and fateful parting, the huge revolver held in two puny, shaking hands, the fingers stiff with fear, and great, slow sobs shuddering through his whole childish frame.

Once the broken, appalling figure of Frisco Red stirred slightly among the reeds and groaned in dull agony. A scream of fear rose in Chick's throat to be hushed immediately by a fear still more acute and awful.

Of all things he dreaded that Red should return to consciousness. Chained by invisible yet weighty gyves to the senseless body, unable to leave the plagued spot because of the orders given and that deeply instilled fear he had for Strong-Arm, the child remained. In his wide-stretched baby eyes was the despair of an unwilling soul damned to an everlasting torment. Thus the night found him there.

CHAPTER XV

THE ROBBERY

MEANTIME, in the former road-house on the hill above Middletown, the Frisco Kid, having discovered in the flour-bin the prison suit stenciled 7292, paused in the pantry and harkened for any noise which would show that the escaped convict still was hiding in the house. But there was no sound from overhead, from any part of the rambling structure.

He recalled Miss Heffernan's words about the disused barroom. On tiptoe then he went through the dining-room and out into the spacious, gloomy hall. The Gay-Cat trotted knowingly before him. Suddenly

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he noticed the Gay-Cat sniffing with prolonged, questing breaths at the crevice between a certain door and the sill. It was as if the dog caught the taint of some human being behind that door.

It was the door just across the hall from the dining-room. Softly the Kid tried the knob. But the door did not give. He thought at once that this must be the former barroom. He tried the key Miss Heffernan had given him, but still the door refused to open. He realized then that the door was bolted from the inside. There was, indeed, some one within that room.

Again he listened. No sound breathed from the room. He thought to call softly through the keyhole. As he bent down, it struck him to peer through that keyhole. But he could see nothing. Whoever was within that room had had the forethought to hang a cloth of some kind over the doorknob, entirely covering the hole and preventing sight into the room.

Abruptly the Frisco Kid lifted erect. His usually pale face was ashen, his eyes seemingly deeper sunk than ever. Now whether to whisper or not he did not know. The precautions taken by the man in the room had caused with smashing force a primitive fact to impact upon his comprehension, changing his purpose, giving him sudden pause.

That man within was as a hunted animal. For several days he had been bayed and hounded down. He was likely to be armed. Certainly he was nervous and inimical, at a final ditch of desperation. Should the boy merely whisper through the keyhole, the man within might fire at him through the door in panicky alarm.

While he hesitated, undecided, the Kid held pressed against his breast with one flour-whitened hand the suit of coarse convict shoddy. What should he do with those black-striped, telltale garments? Hide them certainly; but no nook seemed secretive enough to conceal them securely. They were like an armful of hot embers in a powder-plant. But at last he decided upon the huge open fireplace in the dining-room. Standing in the gaping mouth of the fireplace, upon one of the massive old andirons, he shoved the garments far up the soot-lined chimney.

He came back to the kitchen on tiptoe to ponder over the whole jumbled state of affairs. He did not think to eat; he was too overwrought. He glanced at the clock. It was five minutes to eight o'clock. How time shrieked by! Gipsy Frank would be along very soon now; and here was he, the Frisco Kid, doing absolutely nothing to forestall the burglars, only moving round in futile circles like a dog chasing its tail.

He noticed, in glancing at the clock, that the frosted face of the pendulum box, insecurely shut, had swung open. The money was in plain sight. He got afoot to close the frosted face and thus conceal the money when, like a blow, the long looked-for inspiration struck him. Why not hide the money elsewhere and thus lay the yeggs by the heels?

There was the plan! He would ransack the house, turn it over from top to bottom for valuables, gather all those valuables in a sack or something, and cache them outdoors under a yew hedge or in one of the carriage-shed kennels crowded with dogs. He would leave all the valueless stuff from the ransacked drawers and closets scattered about the floor, the drawers open and in disarray, the chairs and chests turned topsyturvy. Thus when Gipsy Frank's mob at length broke in, the house would have the cyclone-struck appearance of having been already fine-combed for valuables, turned inside out, completely gutted.

The Frisco Kid became at once feverishly active. He banged out of the kitchen and into the carriage shed where he had housed his Gay-Cat the night prior. There surely enough on top of an unopened box of dog biscuits he found a gunnysack. He brought it back.

He took down the bundle of bills from the pendulum box. He thought as he did so of the convict clothes up the flue. Surely that was no safe hiding-place. To make certain they were well concealed he would cache those clothes with the money. He fished the sooted, shoddy garments down from the dining-room chimney, wrapped the bills within, knotted the black-and-white sleeves securely about the bundle and placed all in the bottom of the gunnysack. He left the frosted face of the pendulum box swinging open.

He returned again to the dining room. He pulled open drawers and cast silver knives, forks and spoons clattering into the sack. He left each drawer, as he had done with it, open and in disarray, the discarded contents streaming out upon the carpet.

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It struck him that in taking everything of value he was again forestalling the burglars. Finding the money gone, they might have thought in their turn of stealing anything else of worth. He would cache the gunny-sack of valuables under one of the yew hedges.

He opened a tall window in the side of the room to clamber out upon the lawn.

A noise halted him. He was not certain that it came from the barroom on the other side of the hall or from the kitchen behind him. He looked hastily about. He missed, of a sudden, the dog. Some one was approaching; the Gay-Cat had probably gone to greet the newcomer; he could hear quick footsteps. He must conceal the sack of loot. There was the place—under the table where the red cambric cloth draped down to the rug on the floor, hiding even the polished legs. He swung the sack under the table. It was completely out of sight.

He was rearranging with a quick hand the trailing cambric cloth when he heard a gasp behind him. He turned. There in the doorway, her austere face pale and grim, a bitter light in the eyes behind the gold-rimmed spectacles, stood Miss Heffernan! In one sweep she took in the open and disordered drawers, the obvious robbery. She clutched the jamb of the door.

"Oh, you little thief!" she burst out at him. "You o'nary little thief to rob a lone woman! In twenty years this is the fust time that any one has turned against the bread that he had eaten. What ingratitude and treachery! You mean, low o'nary little thief!"

THE Frisco Kid was struck dumb. She had spoiled all his plans by coming back so soon. How could he begin to explain. The cards seemed stacked against him.

How long he stood and stared slack-jawed at the little old lady he never knew. But suddenly she shivered a little, and then came quietly into the room. She bent down over an open drawer and began silently to straighten its disarray. The boy watched her, hope and pleading crowding his deep-sunk eyes. But she did not look at the boy. She cried to herself, softly.

"God'a'mercy!" she murmured very low. "I shouldn't take on this way. It's not the pore lad's fault; it's all come of his upbringing. I mustn't lay a power of blame on him; he don't know any better, pore thing. I must be less harsh and not too strait-laced and goody-goody, and lead his little wayward feet back into the right path."

She looked up at the boy, her eyes red from tears and piteously pleading.

"You don't want to keep all them stole articles, naow do you, child? That would be very, very ungrateful and wrong. You will give them all back to me and be a tolerable good boy from naow on; won't you, pore dear?"

The Kid still stood as she had found him.

"Aw, say, Miss Heffernan! Aw, say now, ma'am, I didn't mean no harm, honest I didn't. But I can't give them back to yer right away. I'm a-scared, ma'm. Aw, say, Miss Heffernan, I can't tell yer now. I—I jes' wisht I was dead!"

The little old lady snapped erect, her eyes sharpening with suspicion.

"Why, child, why do you talk thataway? What do you mean?"

But truthfully the boy could not explain. If he should return the sack of valuables under the table she would only be robbed of them, shortly and for good, when Gipsy Frank's mob appeared. He could not tell her of Gipsy Frank's mob. She would be too terribly affrighted. She might even think he was a member of that mob himself.

He quailed under the suspicion deepening in her eyes. He was in a real and fearful extremity. Nervously he racked his brain, looking for an out. Suddenly he remembered the man locked in the barroom. He made a little jerking motion of the head toward that room. He gulped—

"He's in there, ma'am."

She started, took a deep, audible breath. She was swept through and through by strong emotion.

"Who? Tell me, child! Who's in there? Jerrold?"

The boy nodded, then abruptly cut short a nod to stiffen into an alertness of harkening. Miss Heffernan, uncontainably excited though she was, noted his sudden rigidity of attitude. She was about to dart toward the barroom; she saw the dog standing tense and bristling in the doorway to the kitchen; she halted dead. Then she, too, listened. The sound came again. The kitchen screen door was slowly and cautiously creaking open.

There were footsteps in the kitchen, a

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muffled exclamation of anger in a man's gruff voice. The Kid realized that Gipsy Frank was in the kitchen. He had noted the open frosted face of the pendulum box of the clock. He knew that the money was gone.

The dog, growling rumblingly in his throat, was retreating from the doorway. The Kid rushed across to the old lady, suddenly panicky with fear for her.

"Yer better go, Miss Heffernan," he pleaded, seeking to hustle her across the room and out of the doorway into the hall. "Yer better go quick. They's liable to git rough with yer when they find I beat 'em to it."

But she mistook his motive. She stiffened into the bitter schoolmarm type. She rallied against his pushing hands, flaming with abrupt hostility.

"Go?" she exclaimed in a voice that broke the silence with unusual loudness. "Me go! Oh, you incorrigible little thief! You ungrateful, treacherous imp—to think that you were conniving all the time with these bad men to rob pore me! Oh, you——"

She paused. Crowding the doorway into the dining-room were three men. Gipsy Frank, in pink shirt and black corduroy coat and trousers, bulked large and evil in the lead. Behind him were two other men, in one of whom the Kid was quick to recognize the pallid-complexioned, thin-haired ticket-butcher, Anzac Pete.

CHAPTER XVI

GIPSY FRANK AND COMPANY

UNDER the straight black band of eyebrows Gipsy Frank's eyes were darting quickly about the disheveled room. He looked from the Frisco Kid to Miss Heffernan. He noted the antagonistic, almost pugnacious attitude of the little old lady. Sharply he glanced again at the boy. He seemed visibly to start as he did, and his mouth curved into a cruel, animal-like snarl.

"So this is yer game, eh, Frisco Kid!"

The Kid looked at the man in a complete and utter surprize. Gipsy Frank knew him! It was true then that somewhere, in some Gipsy *hatsh* or *wardo*, he had run up against the fellow. But exactly where?

The Kid thought quickly, the gruff voice ringing hauntingly in his ears. All he could tell, however, was that there was something strangely familiar in that broad, dark face, that thick-chested frame, that heavy-lipped, snarling mouth.

"So this is yer game," repeated the Gipsy, as if striving to get a grip on himself, fighting for time. "Stickin' up a' ol' woman wot has been a friend ter every road-kid in the country. Wait till some o' the kid mobs around the States hear tell o' this, Frisco Kid. Yer life won't be worth a nickel."

He stepped boldly into the room, as if suddenly sure of himself.

"We've been on this kid's track fer a long time, ma'am," he said, addressing the little old lady with marked deference. "I jedge now yuh nabbed him in the act. Where's the loot? Did he cough up the swag ter yuh?"

She shook her head, still snugly bonneted, and glanced with quick anxiety about the room.

"I don't know what he's done with the silver and money, sir," she returned in a trembling whisper of voice. "But who are you-all?"

The man feigned to be surprized.

"Me?" he asked, lifting the straight black band of eyebrows. "Yuh mean ter say, ma'am, yuh don't know me?"

The two men behind were watching him closely, a thin grin of understanding and perverse admiration slowly growing on their rough faces The Frisco Kid saw through the game. The Gipsy was preparing a ghost story for the old lady—a story which would explain with some plausible reason why he and his pals were there and place all the blame and odium of larcenous intention upon the Frisco Kid.

"Me?" repeated the man once again. "Why me, I'm Frank Lovell, chief detective o' Bigley's Wild Animal Show an' Circus. An' this here is Anzac Peter—I mean, thet's wot we calls Pete 'cause he's a' Australian."

He indicated the pale-faced ticket-seller.

The fellow immediately leaped into the rôle. He scraped the cap from his thin-haired scalp.

"No bally wowser, mum," he smirked in a nasal voice. "An Australian detective, mum."

"This other man," continued Gipsy Frank, indicating the third member of the mob, an undersized sallow-complexioned

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individual, "is known as Sabu-Suva, the Head Hunter, 'cause he acts thet part in a kid show o' the circus, but he's reelly Charley Small, the famous Burns man. We're all dicks fur the Bigley Circus, Miss Heffernan. Mostly we has ter cop off the strong-armers an' stick-ups an' grifters an' dips an' other ringtails wot pester a circus; but of late fer a long time, as I says, ma'am, we've been on this Frisco Kid's trail.

"He's been trackin' along ahead o' the circus, bustin' open the keesters o' post-office safes an' robbin' pore widders and orphings along the road. It makes it bad fer the circus havin' this kind o' crook runnin' ahead o' us an' sp'ilin' our good name. We three was hired jist ter run down sich criminals, an' partic'lar this kid.

"We hearn he was gonna break in here ternight. So we up afore the evenin' performance an' laid low in the bushes outside until we was sure yuh had nabbed him red-handed. We knowed we could git in ter help yuh out afore thet kid could pull any rough stuff. But I wasn't none too easy-like about it. Ther kid's a bad actor, ma'am, ef yuh'll berlieve me. See; he was all ready ter git away outer thet open winder there with all the loot!"

He pointed at the open dining-room window, which he himself had but just noticed.

"Oh, he's hard-boiled, thet kid," he insisted. "I guess we oughter know, ma'am. We've been on this kid's trail a long time. He's been workin' with a nortorious yegg afore this, an' I don't wonder any but the two o' 'em were in on this job. Yuh didn't see anything of another yegg, did yuh, ma'am—a yegg name of Atlanta Slim thet by all right an' reason oughter be safe in stir?"

The Frisco Kid's mouth fell open. He was absolutely astounded. Atlanta Slim! It was months since he had seen Atlanta Slim. At that time Slim had been captured by the Hindu hop-pickers working on J. Curtis Haines' ranches out in California. He had cracked the safe in Haines' office and had been captured through the treachery of the stoolpigeon, Scar-Face Mike Hagan. It was not a sweet memory to the Frisco Kid. Slim had been his buddie and his friend. And Slim had been sent to prison.

But how did this man, Gipsy Frank, know of Slim and the Kid as buddies together? The Kid had thought that only two persons had known of his joining out with Slim. One was that member of Slim's mob called Yorky; the other was the snitch, Scar-Face Mike Hagan. This man before him bore no shadow of resemblance to either of the two.

Yorky had been morbidly white-faced at the time from several years' confinement in Sing Sing. Scar-Face was built like a policeman, with a quarter-inch white scar clefting his beefy red face from left eye to overly strong chin. This man was black-banded of eyebrow and dark as any of the Black Men of Zend. He was a breed Gipsy. How then did he know?

The Frisco Kid eyed critically the other men. He dismissed quickly and altogether the pseudo head-hunter, Charley Small. Pete, the ticket-seller, however, might easily have passed for Yorky on account of his pallid-complexion had not the Kid heard his nasal voice and aspirated accent.

The Frisco Kid noted, as he observed the two men, that a look of bewilderment was slowly etching their faces. It was as if they were unable to follow Gipsy Frank in this abrupt tangent about Atlanta Slim. That part of the ghost story seemed not only new, but very surprizing and puzzling to them.

"YUH say yuh don't know nothin' about this other yegg, ma'am," he heard the gruff voice of the Gipsy saying. "Well, let it ride. The thing ter find out now, ma'am, beggin' yer pardon, is where's the loot. We've got the kid here. Now either he's got thet loot hid som'eres about, or else thet pal o' his, Atlanta Slim, got away with it through thet open winder there.

"—— it!" he exploded sharply, a rush of blood darkening his swarth face. "I'll bet thet one-time loser has beat me to it agin!"

Over the top of her spectacles the little old lady looked at the boy as if astounded at the extent of his perfidy. So this tiny, pale, wistful-appearing road-kid, whom she had fed and mothered and taken into her house as one of her very own, was really a case-hardened criminal, the boon companion of a notorious yeggman! It seemed almost past belief.

"My pore sinning boy," she pleaded with him, "why are you so teetotally bad? I never thought this of you; it's so simply turrible! But I'm only—only too willing to

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forget and forgive all, if you will just forsake this wicked life——"

"An' return yuh the stuff wot he stole. Don't fergit thet, ma'am," insisted Gipsy Frank.

The Frisco Kid looked at the man. He was beginning deeply to hate and fear the fellow. He knew his game. The Gipsy wanted to learn where the Kid had cached the money and silver in order to make off with it himself.

"Yuh better leave him to me, ma'am," suggested Gipsy Frank. "We'll make him cough up in short order. He'll tell where Slim boy went with the swag, or else where he's got it hid. Yuh leave him to us, please ma'am, an' go inter the kitchen an' rest quiet a bit. We circus dicks has ways o' makin' these hard-boiled crooks talk."

The Frisco Kid sensed the ugly threat in the last words. He shivered. He knew what it was to be tortured. Had he not suffered often at the hands of Frisco Red and once, unforgetably, from Scar-Face Mike Hagan, the stool? He looked up at the little old lady, an extremity of distress and pleading in his deep-sunk eyes.

No woman could have refused that look in the Kid's eyes. Quickly Miss Heffernan shook her white head.

"No," she said quietly; "I think I'll stay right here."

The man called Gipsy Frank uttered a choked exclamation of anger. He stepped toward the Kid. He nodded Charley Small, the sometimes Wild Man, over toward him. He got the Frisco Kid by the wrist. Interposing his burly frame between the boy and the old lady, he vised his big paw about the Kid's wrist and began slowly and covertly to turn. Charley Small crowded close like a pickpocket's stall, helping thereby to conceal the actions of the other. Meanwhile Gipsy Frank talked in a smooth if gruff tone:

"Better tell, Kid. Yuh knows you'll have to. Here, yuh Anzac!" he called, half-turning round to the Australian in the doorway. "Look through this room, will yuh, an' see ef yuh kin nose out the swag? Wot d'yuh say now, Kid? Gonna beef where it's hid? Gonna squeal ef Slim boy's got it or not? Say, I knows all about Slim, Kid, so yuh may as well spill.

"Yuh knows, Slim was ter be sent up in California. But them hog-glombers had gone on strike an' fired ole Curt Haines' hop-vines on the very same night as Slim cracked the Haines' peter, so the authorities was afraid them labor unions out West 'ud think Slim was one of 'em an' start soup in politics jist ter save him. The Chi National had a strong case against Slim boy, so they extradited him ter Illinois an' shoved him through on the bank-breakin' charge.

"Where'd yuh meet up with him ag'in, Kid? I thought he got twenty year. Must 'a' made his gitaway somehow, though I ain't heard none about it. Where'd yuh meet up with him, Kid? Where's Slim boy now with the swag?"

The Frisco Kid bit his lip. He bent over, contorting with pain as brutally the Gipsy twisted his arm more and more. The sweat started from his forehead; tears of agony showed in his eyes. Yet with all the pain, it sounded odd to him that this man should know so much and be so manifestly interested in Atlanta Slim. Indeed, there was something in the Gipsy's attitude very reminiscent of Scar-Face Mike Hagan, the stool-pigeon.

The Kid remembered that night when, down in the little yellow shack among the burning hop-fields, Atlanta Slim had cracked the Haines safe and stepped out into the arms of the onswooping Hindus. He remembered how Scar-Face had wanted him to be a witness in the trial of Slim. Scar-Face had dragged him down in the tar-weeds when he would have gone to Slim there among the Ragheads. With a hand on each frail shoulder, Scar-Face had held him down as in a crushing, terrible machine.

Scar-Face Mike Hagan wanted to earn the large rewards offered for Slim. He proffered the Kid a road-stake of one hundred dollars if the boy would tell all he knew about Slim.

But Slim had fed the boy and named him the Frisco Kid and taken him as his buddie; yes, him and his dog as buddies. He had promised to share with the Kid on this safe-cracking job—the last of his yegg life—and then he and the boy and the dog were to go shanty-boating together down the old Mississippi. Slim had stirred deeps of the Kid's being never plumbed before. He had been altogether good to the Kid. The Frisco Kid could never tell on Slim!

Scar-Face, hearing that, had jerked out a revolver from where it was concealed under his padded vest. He had put one foot

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upon the boy's chest and held him from squirming off into the weeds and the dark night. Point-blank at the boy he had fired the revolver, but the gun had proven empty. Scar-Face then had kicked the boy. He had kicked the boy until the boy could no longer feel those brutal kicks.

"Wot d'yuh say now, Kid?" insisted the Gipsy in that deadly tone. "A bit more an' yuh won't have no arm in yer socket. Better tell, Kid."

The Frisco Kid gnawed his lips in effort to contain his agony. He wanted to scream but he feared to scream. He feared to alarm Miss Heffernan. Were she to become aware that he was being tortured, there behind the concealing bulks of Charley Small and the Gipsy, she would instantly know what type these men were. She would see through their game. And the Kid was fearful lest, thoroughly aroused, she might roundly accuse the men and they, realizing their game was up, might then turn like cornered rats and inflict on her the violence they were even then using on him. Had not the message from Frisco Red said that they were to go armed and be prepared to kill?

Interruption came from an unexpected source. There sounded through the room an ominous and prolonged growling. It came from the Gay-Cat, yellow hair bristling, lips drawn menacingly back over sharp fangs. The dog hurtled forward and snapped at the Gipsy's high boots.

The man swore resentfully. He gave the dog a savage kick that propelled him, sliding as on ice, over the rug and well under the dining-table. He gave also, as he kicked, a sudden sharp wrench to the Kid's twisted arm. Suffering horribly, the boy exclaimed aloud.

Instantly the little old lady was between the Gipsy and his victim. The agonized cry of the boy had apprised her, for the first time, of the fact that he was being tortured.

"Let go! Let go that boy, I say!" she cried, and she pounded frantically upon the Gipsy's broad chest.

Immediately the man, still playing his part, released the Kid's wrenched arm. The boy nursed that arm.

"So that's the kind of detectives you be!" she added scornfully. "Torturing a pore little weak youngster!"

She looked at Gipsy Frank, an odd suspicious light behind the gold-rimmed glasses.

SUDDENLY that member of the mob called Charley Small made a sound in his throat like the guttural exclamation of a head-hunter. He pointed toward the dining-table. Underneath was the Gay-Cat. In being kicked under that table the dog had become entangled in the trailing ends of the red cloth cover; in trying to extricate himself, he had only made matters worse. Now, a ball of red, squirming life, he backed out from under the table, carrying the cloth cover entirely away. There, exposed to full view under the table, was the gunny-sack of valuables, the open mouth showing the silver spoons the Kid last had put in!

Gipsy Frank darted for the table. He pulled out the sack. He dug his hand into the mouth. He was wildly excited. He rattled the silver spoons and knives and forks. He was digging for the money.

Suddenly he withdrew his hand. He looked wide-eyed at what he held in that hand. It was the black-and-white striped shoddy of a convict.

"Atlanta Slim!" he exclaimed, his dark face almost black with pounding blood. "He's escaped from stir as I thought! He's out—an' he's been here! He's been here!"

"Jerrold!" burst shrilly from Miss Heffernan. "It's Jerrold! That boy wasn't telling fibs; it's the truth, thank God! Jerrold's home!"

The little old lady became all at once very pale and slumped back against the wall as if seeking support.

For an appreciable moment the Gipsy looked at her with a peculiar wildness in his stare. His hand clenched tightly about the clothing as if with some inward tension. He felt the bills, crisp and crinkly, within. He jerked at the zebra sleeves and exposed the ten one-hundred-dollar notes. His voice boomed out like a foghorn:

"Here we are, guns! Here's the money! One thousand hicks! Come on; let's go!"

Forgotten was the old lady holding herself up by the wall; forgotten the Frisco Kid, whom they were supposed as detectives to be apprehending. The three men started in a rush for the open window, Gipsy Frank in the lead, his heavy boots pounding the flooring and shaking the house.

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With supreme effort the old lady gathered herself together.

"Thieves, thieves!" she shouted at the top of her sharp voice. "You are the real thieves! I see it all now. That boy was only trying to save the money by hiding it from you. Robbers! Thieves!"

The Frisco Kid stood helplessly by. He could do naught to stop the men. He was overwhelmed by his own impotency. Yet he thought he heard, above the thunder of the Gipsy's boots, the sound of a bolt being sharply slid in its iron brackets. That grating sound came from the barroom.

CHAPTER XVII

GIPSY FRANK SHOWS HIS TRUE COLOR

CAME, at that climactic moment, an unthinkably abrupt interposition of solid flesh and bone. It did not come from the direction of the barroom, however. A man bulked up outside the open dining-room window. In one hand, pointing at the three onrushing crooks, was clenched a bulldog automatic; on the sleeve of that pistol arm, at the wrist, a plated star gleamed ominously. The Frisco Kid recognized in this drooping-mustached, cutaway-coated and slouch-hatted man the sheriff who had forced him to retrace his steps the evening previous.

"No, you don't, Gipsy Frank!" said the sheriff quietly.

Gipsy Frank, in the lead for the window, made a sharp swerve toward the doorway into the kitchen.

"No use, Ballyhoo," said the sheriff laconically. "I got you covered, and I've got a coupla men waiting for you at every door. Put up your hands."

The last was an explosive command. Gipsy Frank, swerving again, had made a sudden vicious movement toward the vest under his corduroy coat. The Kid, startled at the movement, so reminiscent of Scar-Face Mike Hagan, was instantly aware of the Gipsy's intent. The breed had indeed come armed. Beneath that vest was a revolver concealed.

But Gipsy Frank's hand never reached the vest. Two men, clad in blue jeans and wearing the stars of deputies, were poking rifles through the doorway from the kitchen; two others had appeared, with the suddenness of jacks-in-the-box, in the entrance from the hall. The three crooks stopped dead, their hands flung overhead, their jaws slack with an utter and sickly surprize.

"Come on, Powers," said the sheriff as if to some one behind him.

He leaped upon the sill of the window and dropped down on the rug of the dining-room.

A man in a garish plaid cap appeared behind him at the open window. He gripped the sides of the window and swung himself with apelike agility nimbly into the room without touching foot to the sill. He was a short man of quick, lithe movements. He had a rough-chiseled, high-cheekboned face of a peculiar muddy color; his eyes were almond-shaped and oddly greenish-blue in hue; and his mouth was a brutal unfinished-looking gash.

His feet had no sooner bounded resiliently upon the rug than he reached his raw-knuckled right hand under the left armpit of his coat; there was a distinct snap; and his hand reappeared holding a police-special, short-barreled .38.

"Strong-Arm!" breathed the Frisco Kid, astounded and bewildered. "Now what's that old Ref boy doin' here?"

The sheriff was waiting for Strong-Arm. He asked—

"Any of these crooks the escaped con we want, Powers?"

With his slow, greenish eyes the Wobbly looked the three men over. He shook his head.

"No, Kummer," he returned. "None of these fuzzy-tailed prowlers is thet mugged gun, Number 7292. But you'd better frisk 'em, sheriff. I don't trust them cheap circus crooks none."

The sheriff acted promptly on Strong-Arm's advice. It seemed almost as if he were under orders to the Wobbly. He strode at once to Gipsy Frank and, jerking open coat and vest, exposed a revolver hanging in a cloth sling under the vest. It was not a large revolver; its barrel had been sawed down. On either side the cloth sling the vest was padded deeply. That was to round off the bulge of the revolver. It was to lessen, if not wholly conceal, the outlines of that revolver. The sheriff relieved Gipsy Frank of the weapon and snatched the currency from his upheld hand.

Strong-Arm stood behind the sheriff at the open window, legs spread apart and

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police special in hand, his greenish, oblong eyes roving the room with an acute interest. He noted the old lady pressed against the wall; the boy beside her, dressed in Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers. He looked away to the deputies crowding the doorways. They all were watching absorbedly the sheriff search the burglars. Quickly thereupon Strong-Arm's long, greenish eyes leaped back to the boy in the Fauntleroy garb.

The Frisco Kid was watching him rigidly in perplexed wonder and no little fear.

Strong-Arm raised his left hand and covered with four fingers his brutal, unfinished-looking gash of mouth, coughed slightly as if clearing his throat and then, sure of the boy's attention, winked furtively a wink of recognition and secret fellowship.

It was the crook office. It told the boy that he had nothing personally to fear from Strong-Arm. Because it was done covertly it told further that neither the sheriff nor his deputies were at all in-the-know; to them, the Wobbly was merely Abraham Powers, a guard delegated by the warden of Joliet to aid the sheriff in the search for the escaped convict. Strong-Arm, however, had some deep scheme afoot. He, the Frisco Kid, was supposed to hold his peace and await events.

The sheriff was feeling the bulges and pockets of the other two circus crooks. In the hip pocket of Charley Small he found a billy of lead. Anzac Pete was armed with a razor.

The sheriff pocketed the various weapons with a grunt as expressive as "I thought so!" He stooped to pick up, from where Gipsy Frank had cast them, the numbered black-and-white striped garments. He approached the little old lady.

"Here is your thousand dollars, Miss Heffernan," he said politely, handing her the bills; then, his manner growing suddenly constrained and official—

"Now you will tell me, please, how these came here."

He held up the convict suiting.

The little old lady did not look at the zebra garments. Her fingers searched her dress for a pocket in which to place the currency, the while nervously, evasively, her eyes darted here and there behind the gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Oh, don't ask me, Sheriff Kummer," she pleaded. "I can't tell. I'm not sartain. I—I don't know!"

The lie came with a distinct wrench. Yet was she the inevitable woman, fighting for her own flesh and blood—her nephew hunted and cowering there in the barroom.

"No?" returned the sheriff, his voice rising with incredulity. "You don't know? Well, then, what did you mean, Miss Heffernan, when you said—

" 'It's Jerrold's!'

"Oh, I heard you. I saw the whole little act with my eye to that sill there; I heard you through that open window, and so did my deputy, Abraham Powers here. Isn't that right, Powers?"

The sheriff appealed to Strong-Arm with marked deference in his tone. The sabcat nodded.

"I know a thing or two, Miss Heffernan. This blouse is numbered 7292. Convict 7292 escaped from Joliet four days ago. He was seen in these striped clothes heading this way a coupla hours gone. That's why I'm here; George Kummer ain't no fool. We were right on the heels of that escaped gun until he shook us off only two miles from this house. Where is 7292 now? Just explain a little, will you, ma'am?"

His voice sharpened sarcastically.

The little old lady, still bonneted as for the street, trembled in an extremity of fear and helplessness. Her worn hands sought the wall behind her, the fingers nervously picking.

"Oh, I can't; I can't, sheriff," she exclaimed piteously. "I 'clare to goodness, I'm not sartain. I—I don't know what it is all about. Oh, do believe me, sheriff."

"Well, we'll soon find out," harshly snapped the representative of the law.

He turned round on his deputies.

"Here, Josh Spiers and the rest of you fellers, herd this fancy bunch of cheap crooks out into the kitchen. I'll sweat 'em one at a time in the dining-room here. I'll call you, Powers, if I need you. I'll soon git the low-down on this little prize-puzzle, or know the reason why."

HE STEPPED up behind Gipsy Frank, the last of the trio of crooks to enter the kitchen. He said sharply, close to the man's ear—

"What'd yuh mean—Atlanta Slim's made his getaway from stir?"

He trusted to the abruptness of the

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question to startle the fellow into committing himself. It is a favorite third-degree trick.

But the man called Gipsy Frank only swung his broad, dark face slowly round, looked full at the sheriff a tense moment and then quickly closed his left eye and jerked his head back toward the dining-room.

The Frisco Kid was following behind the crooks, aiding the trembling old lady. He saw the wise exchange. He knew from it that Gipsy Frank wanted to see the sheriff alone in the dining-room. He wanted to be the first to see the sheriff alone in the dining-room.

The sheriff stepped back.

"Just a moment, Gipsy Frank," he said. "I want to see you in here."

Gipsy Frank turned, his black band of eyebrows lifting as if in surprize. He stepped out of the herded line and with seeming dejection walked back into the dining-room. The sheriff promptly closed the door behind him.

There in the tidy kitchen the deputies stood guard over the quaking old woman, the Frisco Kid and the two circus crooks, while the rumble of heavy voices rose and fell in the other room. The dog, Gay-Cat, put stump of tail between legs and slunk in a roundabout way to the Frisco Kid. The Kid lifted the dog and hugged the round yellow head against his scrawny neck. Gay-Cat tried thereat and most solicitously to lick his left cheek and the tip of his nose.

"He jes' wanted to git the sheriff alone," whispered the Kid into the dog's ragged ear. "I'll bet he lams that Johnny Tinplate over the head with a chair and makes his escape. He's a bad un, that Gipsy."

He turned to look for Strong-Arm, alias Abraham Powers, in order to convey by eye-flash his suspicion of Gipsy Frank's intentions. What a surprize! Strong-Arm had left the other deputies; was standing by the closed door through which throbbed dully the indistinct voices, his right ear glued to the crack between door and jamb. Those other deputies might surmize as they pleased—he was eavesdropping to the conversation going forward in the dining-room with an utter disregard for their opinion, with a complete recklessness and bravado.

All at once Gipsy Frank's gruff tones swelled in volume as if some statement he had made had been refuted or doubted by the sheriff and he thought by thundering to down all argument, force belief. Amid the rumble of his voice his words could be heard in the kitchen with fair distinctness.

"I'm tellin' yuh the straight, Kummer," he was saying. "Why, I've worked fer the govamint fer years as an elbow and fer the Burns people too. Who nabbed Chi Blondy in thet post-office job down in Simpson jist below here, about ten months ago? Thet was me as a govamint dick. Did yuh ever hear o' Whitey Horn, the sab-cat? Thet's me when I'm noseyin' fur the Jugel Agency among the Wobblies—the I. W. W.'s. Lemme——"

"For the Jugel Agency, was it!" hoarsely muttered Strong-Arm on the other side of the door.

Swiftly he reached out his left hand and flexed his stubby fingers about the door-knob; the other hand brought up the police special to the level of his tumultuously heaving chest. He took an abrupt step forward as if to burst into the dining-room.

But on the sudden the insensate fanatic heat fled his oblong greenish eyes. He snatched his hand from the door-knob as if that knob were a scorching live coal. The police special came down with a jerk to his hip. He retreated from the door as from a threatening calamity, precipitantly, an aghast and foolish expression overspreading his muddy face.

"What's the matter with me?" he muttered shakily under his breath. "This ain't house-cleanin' day yit."

From the other room, loud upon surprized ears, boomed the voice of Gipsy Frank:

"Lemme ast yuh somethin', Kummer. Who was it got all the dope on Atlanta Slim, alias Swaggerin' Bob, out in Californy——"

The sheriff uttered an exclamation. It was the name—

"Atlanta Slim!"

Then he could be heard to say:

"And that's who I'm after now. Broke out of Joliet, he did, four days ago. Nobody knows how; it's darned queer; but every sheriff in the State is on the trail, and the prison warden and all kinds of deputies and posses. He was here tonight. I know; I got the dope straight; and that's

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his suit numbered 7292. Say, what do *you* know about Atlanta Slim?"

"Me? Me know about Atlanta Slim? Why, I knows all about him! Who was it follered him fer months clear acrosst the country from thet peter job in the First National o' Hartford an' the big haul on the Chi National? Why, I knows all about him; yes, siree; all about him, 'ceptin' this new gitaway stunt. Broke from Joliet, eh? Why, there'll be dodgers sent all over the States about Slim boy an', man, wot a heapin' reward! Sheriff, from now on I'm out after Atlanta Slim myself."

Dawn was breaking on the listening Kid. Yet how could it be? Gipsy Frank had not the beefy red face of a policeman. There was no quarter-inch scar streaking with hideous whiteness the red health of that face from left eye to overstrong chin. Truly, Gipsy Frank had a large jaw, a heavy-lipped, snarling mouth and a broad face; but that face was dark as any of the Black Men of Zend and the eyebrows met over the nose in a straight band of inky hairs.

The Frisco Kid looked in profound perplexity at Strong-Arm, backed away from the door. Strong-Arm's head was thrown back and his lips were drawn away from the strong white teeth in an animal-like snarl. In his long, half-closed, greenish eyes was a cold, gloating light. It was as if, having overheard all that Gipsy Frank had to reveal, his fanatic brain had gestated a swift plan that would require only watchful waiting to move it inevitably to its crashing and fateful dénouement.

The Kid turned to the two crooks of Gipsy Frank's mob. They too were listening in a strange fascination of harkening, their eyes upon each other, a terrible realization growing in those eyes. He saw the man called Anzac Pete swallow nervously, his throat-apple bulging up and down.

Unexpectedly the door into the dining-room swung open. The sheriff looked into the kitchen.

"Give me a basin of water," he ordered, "and a piece of yaller washing-soap."

Miss Heffernan tremulously poured into a tin basin some water from the kettle upon the cold stove. The sheriff carried it into the dining-room. He seemed to forget to shut the door behind him. He placed the basin upon the table.

The Frisco Kid watched bepuzzled. The while he listened acutely for some sound from the barroom. He thought once he heard a remote creak, as if a sash or door were being opened somewhere in the reaches of the house.

HE SAW Gipsy Frank take off his corduroy coat, roll up the sleeves of his pink shirt and step to the basin as if about to wash his face. And that was exactly what the fellow proceeded to do! He bent down, and rubbed and scrubbed, with the water and coarse washing-soap, at the skin of his cheeks and the hair of the eyebrows over the nose.

When at last he lifted up, puffing, the hair streaking water down his face, the skin of his face was no longer the swarth hue of the Gipsy. It was flaming red from the scrubbing, beefy red as a policeman's. And there was no band of black brows across the top of the nose. The eyebrows were separated as widely as the far-spaced, brutal eyes.

"Mike Hagan, the stool-pigeon!" exclaimed the sheriff as he looked at the man's dripping red face. "So it's really you, you slick blackguard!"

The Frisco Kid stiffened and congealed in every limb. He could feel the pulse pounding crashingly in his ears.

"Scar-Face!" he breathed in a cold whisper of terror.

Now he knew! Just as Gipsy Frank had scrubbed off the pigment that had dyed his skin to the swarth hue of a gipsy, just so, back in the tar-weeds of California after he had kicked the boy into insensibility, had Scar-Face rubbed off the paint of his faked-up hideous blemish, that jigger across chin and cheek which had given him a certain identity among crooks. The kid was aware at last where he had heard before that gruff, snarling voice. Gipsy Frank was Scar-Face Mike Hagan, the stool that had peached on Slim and sent him up, months gone, to Joliet.

Some one brushed by the Kid and stood swaying in the doorway, clinging weakly to the frame. It was little old Miss Heffernan.

"Jerrold!" she cried in a quavering voice. "It's you, Jerrold, after twenty years! But good laws!" in a sharp frightened gasp. "Then that man hiding in the barroom isn't Jerrold at all!"

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THE world seemed to reel, the whole rambling old house to quake and stagger as in a seismic shock. The deputies, their hangdog captives, Strong-Arm, Sheriff Kummer, the Frisco Kid—all looked in dazed unbelief from Miss Heffernan to Gipsy Frank, *alias* Scar-Face Mike Hagan. But it was indeed true. All could read that plainly on the face of Hagan himself.

What a sorrowful moment for the little old lady so good to road-kids! This utter scamp was her long-awaited and long-prayed-for nephew, Jerrold, the runaway boy of more than twenty years gone—this thief in the night who had stolen into her home and under the sheltering roof of his babyhood had tried to wrest from his own aunt her pitiful store of wealth. Fate had never played a crueler trick than it had played so unmeritedly upon Miss Heffernan!

A deep and moving pity smote the Frisco Kid, and the salt tears blinded his eyes so that he could see no longer her unforgetable tragic face. Even the sheriff and the circus crooks, once the wild look of unbelief and consternation smoothed from their faces, became suddenly grim with sympathy for her.

But abruptly, with smashing impact, the sinister significance of her last words penetrated the shocked intelligence of Sheriff Kummer.

"The man in the barroom," he repeated, slewing round to her again, his mouth open and exposing under the drooping mustache much gold work. "You mean the owner of this zebra suit?"

She nodded dumbly, too shaken and overwrought by all that had happened to speak.

"Here, Abe Powers, watch these circus crooks," shouted the sheriff. "Come on, you others; we'll break into the barroom. We'll get that Atlanta Slim."

CHAPTER XVIII

STRONG-ARM STARTS HOUSE-CLEANING

THE Frisco Kid gave a tortured, incoherent cry at the sheriff's words, and hugged his Gay-Cat to him so tightly that the dog squealed once like a trap-nipped rat. The Kid's face had turned a sickly gray; his distended, agonized eyes burned in his dead face like two great woful stars. How he hated to see his former buddie, Atlanta Slim, taken there before his eyes!

But he could do nothing, only watch the sheriff and his four deputies clatter out of the dining-room. As the men turned their backs to him in gaining the hall he could see their free hands wrenching electric torches from their hip pockets. Strong-Arm, *alias* Abraham Powers, alone remained in the dining-room to keep an official eye on Mike Hagan and his circus grifters.

Sheriff Kummer and his deputies effected an entrance into the barroom without any difficulty. Atlanta Slim had left the door unbolted since that time when, just before the appearance of the sheriff on the scene, he had been about to burst out to the assistance of Miss Heffernan. The men disappeared into the darkness of the room, spraying the ghostly beams of light about and calling sharply upon Slim to surrender to the law.

The Kid found himself dragging his cold, squeamish body on stuttering legs toward the barroom and peering, as into a tunnel, into that place of strange glooms and lunging lights. The blood was pounding in his ears with the fever of his pulse. Any moment he expected to hear a shot or else the voice of the sheriff yelping in triumph.

But no such pealing outcry came. The Kid sickened with the suspense. The febrile state of his nerves robbed his eyes of their functioning power; but still he could manage to hear as from a great distance the curses of the searching men, the sounds of their stumbling against boxes and over old lumber.

How long after it was, he never knew; but there came a tremendous bang, like the report of a pistol or the thud of an opened shutter. His brain cleared miraculously. He heard the sheriff bellowing:

"Here's where he got out! He's flew the coop, the slick rat! While we were gassin' in that other room like a bunch o' the Ladies' Aid he shoved through this window and then jammed the shutter tight behind him so's we wouldn't notice it being open. Looket that broken yew-hedge where he dropped down!"

The Kid's heart began suddenly to pump at a surprizing speed, leaping like a live wild thing, filling his whole chest and choking him. He hugged Gay-Cat convulsively

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to him and whispered hoarsely into one ragged canine ear:

"He's got away, Gay-Cat, old-timer! Slim's got away!"

What a brave and reckless fellow, that Atlanta Slim! Like a yeast rose within the boy all his old unquestioning admiration and faith in his glorious buddie!

He looked up sharply, sensing that some one was staring at him. He caught sight of Miss Heffernan standing in affright and bewilderment against one wall of the dining-room, her bespectacled eyes riveted upon the barroom door through which Sheriff Kummer and his four deputies had disappeared.

Beyond her was Strong-Arm leaning against the jamb of the kitchen doorway and swinging his police special from the two crooks within the kitchen to Mike Hagan standing, spread-legged and expectant, near the open dining-room window. Strong-Arm's head was turned back over one shoulder and it was he who was staring at the Kid. Though the Wobbly surely must have heard what the sheriff said and hence fully realized that Slim had made a getaway, the Kid could still read in his long, greenish eyes an acute question.

The Frisco Kid gave ready answer. There was no mistaking that emphatic nod of the unkempt head, that light of epic victory on his glowing face. Atlanta Slim had got away! A look oddly incandescent swept through the muddy complexion of Strong-Arm's face; his face lighted up with satanic triumph. He stepped out of the kitchen doorway and toward Mike Hagan.

From the barroom came the voice of the sheriff barking out orders:

"We're wasting time, —— it! Out the window, a coupla you fellows, and see if you can pick up that zebra's trail."

Strong-Arm was close to Hagan. His cold, green eyes on Hagan's wide-spread ones, he leaned forward and whispered. The Frisco Kid could not hear what he said; not even Miss Heffernan, who was nearer him, could hear what he said; but what he said was:

"So yer Whitey Horn, the stool fer the Jugel Agency among the I. W. W.'s, eh? Well, does yuh know who I am? Me, I'm Strong-Arm, the Avenging Angel o' the Wobblies."

Mike Hagan must have heard of him before. He gave a short, hoarse, strangled cry. He flung up one arm as if to ward off a blow and fell back toward the open window, his beefy face blanching with terror.

"Yuh will try ter break fer thet open winder!" yelled Strong-Arm abruptly, theatrically.

He jerked up the police special and blazed away at the retreating pink-shirted chest, once, twice, three times.

Hagan's upflung arm dropped like a slug of lead; his jaw sagged, his tongue lolled out, he slumped to his knees; and then his head and trunk shot forward on the rug for all the world as if he were striking out into water.

Sheriff Kummer and his two remaining deputies rushed into the room. They found Miss Heffernan pressed against the wall, white as a fresh towel, her eyes bulging with horror; Strong-Arm, heavy of face and morosely somber, standing near the dining-table, revolver in hand; and before him, flat on his face upon the rug and altogether dead, the stool-pigeon, Jerrold Michael Hagan.

"Good Lord, what's this, Powers?" asked the sheriff.

"His us'al tricks, Kummer," returned Strong-Arm grimly. "He tried ter make a break through thet open winder an' I got him, the —— stool."

The Wobbly had played his subterranean game skilfully. No one could contradict him, for of all those present, not one had heard his whispered words to Hagan. He held out the police special, grimy from usage, to the sheriff.

"I s'pose I'm under arrest, Kummer; what?"

"That's the formality, Powers," nodded the sheriff. "It's too bad, Abe, but it was in the line of duty. You'd better keep the gat, though. You'll need it for that Slim party before the night is out, I'm thinking."

CHAPTER XIX

STRONG-ARM'S CHICK

FOR two days past the house on the hill had been crowded with folk who had not crossed that threshold in years. There were gray, spare farmers' wives who had ridden in on buckboards and flivvers from remote pockets and corners of the county; there were stout bovine women from right next door in Middletown, the wives of prosperous merchants of the township. Both

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sorts had been girl and girl and skipped to school with Miss Heffernan in the long ago; but only a death in her house and that the death of the motherless nephew she had raised from a babe caused them to recall that friendship and feel for the "queer upstairs" old maid in her tragic bereavement.

There was one mercy to the lugubrious ceremonial. So busy was Miss Heffernan recalling names to fit faces and in listening to awkwardly put words of condolence from strangers, dimly remembered, that she had no time to think about the loss of those gilded illusions which had kept her going almost half her years, which had caused her to be so good to road-kids.

But now it was the third night, and the rambling old structure upon the hill was suddenly hushed and empty. They sat in the tidy kitchen, Miss Heffernan, the Frisco Kid and his dog. The Gay-Cat was outstretched upon the boy's lap, his sharp little head turned sidewise in the crotch of the Kid's arm and his brown canine eyes closed in sleep.

Miss Heffernan sat opposite in an oddly crouching attitude in her rocking-chair. She looked very frail and beaten, her pale, fragile hands clasped quietly together in her lap, her eyes strangely dull; for she was facing facts now, the most terrible ordeal any one may undergo in this vale of sorrows called living.

Outside it was a wide, hollow night, starless and very black. Through the screening of the kitchen door came nervous little gusts that caused the yellow flame of the kerosene lamp to blink in its wall-bracket like a sleepyhead batting his eye. The figure 8 o'clock ticked heavily as if adding up a hard sum, and its hands climbed slowly toward nine o'clock and bedtime.

There sounded a sharp tattoo like the rapping of knuckles on the door and then on the heels of it, in a sudden wintry gust, the light of the lamp wafted out. The Kid gave a hoarse, strangled cry as if some one had him by the throat. He sat there unable to move, in a complete funk, believing in all the weird and supernatural stories he had ever heard, too dismayed and rattled to think of digging in his pockets for a match to strike a light. The rapping sound came again.

Miss Heffernan rustled by him and the next moment was talking in whispers with some one in the blackness beyond the screen door. The door squeaked open and then two shadows moved vaguely back into the kitchen.

"Won't you light up the lamp if you've a match in your pockets?" asked Miss Heffernan of the Frisco Kid.

She seemed to turn back to the shadowy visitor.

"The lamp blew out real mysterious-like, just as you knocked," she explained in a shaky voice. "It's given us both the uncanny creeps."

"Us both? Who else is here with yer, Miss Heffernan, ma'am?"

The voice of the stranger shook like a twanged guitar string, as if its owner also felt frightened. It was not the voice of a man; it was the thin, sexless voice of a child, shrill now with deep consternation.

At the sound of it the Frisco Kid began once more to breathe. He leaped afoot, spilling the suddenly yelping Gay-Cat headfirst out of sleep and sprawling upon the floor.

"If it ain't Chick, Strong-Arm's Chick!" he exclaimed. "And here's me so badly skeered I had the belly-ache with thinkin' all the time you was Strong-Arm come back again, or maybe the ghost o' Mike Hagan hisself!"

"That you, Frisco Kid?" answered a relieved voice from the dark. "Miss Heffernan here never tole me you was in the house. I warn't expectin' to meet up with any bo, least of all good ol' Frisco."

The Kid had dug out a match from among the odds and ends crowding his pockets. Nursing the feeble flame between his hands, he climbed upon a chair and, removing the swiftly cooling glass chimney, ignited the wick.

As the kitchen leaped into warm yellow glow he turned round to face Chick. The little ten-year-older stood near the screen door, his pipestem legs bare to the knees and coated with the brown dust of the road, his soft, pouting, infantile face oddly pale beneath its disheveled mat of straw-colored hair.

"What yuh doin' here, Chick?" he asked. "Where's Strong-Arm?"

It was sickening, the abject look of terror that suddenly distended the baby blue eyes of Chick and caused them to glance this way and that as if jerked by strings. The boy's strained glance fell at last upon Miss Heffernan and became fixed there, the

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starkness of terror dimming into the graciousness of peering wonder.

Miss Heffernan had slumped into the rocking-chair before the stove. She appeared to have entirely forgotten about the advent of this tiny tad in faded red sweater and knee trousers. Her eyes once again were dull and remote.

The Frisco Kid got quietly down from the chair.

"She's away from herse'f, Chick," he whispered. "She's had a death in her fambly and she's gone plumb queer-upstairs with all the sorrer of it. You can go ahead and spiel, Chick, without her hearin' one word."

Chick reached out and got the Kid by one of the straps of his Norfolk jacket.

"You tell me, Frisco," he pleaded, his tiny lower lip starting an uncontrollable trembling. "Good ol' Frisco, you'll tell me, won't yuh? I'm jist achin' to find out. Where's Strong-Arm?"

The Kid was surprized.

"Did he ditch yer?" he countered.

Chick gulped and lowered his eyes.

"Me, I ain't shootin' off my face," he said surlily, "until yer tells me all the latest news about Strong-Arm. Frisco!"

He looked up suddenly.

"I'm skeered to death of thet Wobbly!"

A shiver ran through his pitifully frail body.

"AW, CHICK-A-BIDDY!" was wrenched from the Kid.

He put his arm about the little fellow's shoulder. He looked over toward Miss Heffernan, and, keeping his eyes upon her, went on:

"I seed Strong-Arm last jest three nights ago. He was here. Ssh, Chick! She don't know nothin' about him an' I don't want her to find out. But you don't mean ye're skeered of Strong-Arm 'cause yuh run out on him, does yer?"

"Naw. He run out on me. He sold me to yer ol' jocker, Frisco Red."

"Frisco Red—hmm! But where'd yuh meet up with that whisky bum? Where's he now? Did yuh ditch Red too, Chick?"

Chick nodded and in low tones related the story of Strong-Arm's meeting with Frisco Red up the railroad near Bedford.

"So that's how it was," interposed the Kid. "Here I've been wonderin' how Strong-Arm got to workin' hand-in-glove with the sheriff. He got the official docket from Red, eh?"

"Yes," said Chick. "An' after he beat up Red onmerciful, as I tole yuh, Strong-Arm he toins to me. He hands me his own pussonel private gat.

" 'Take this shootin'-iron,' he says, 'an' stay here with Red. Them's my orders, Chick. When Red comes to and starts to beat yuh up, you jist plug him proper. I allus dreamed that it was a little 'fraid kid like youse, Chick, what should croak me ol' jocker, Frisco Red!'"

The incident had made a deep mark on the child's soul.

"I sha'n't ever fergit them words of Strong-Arm, not till I die," he said, his lower lip once again starting its ungovernable trembling. "I wanted to do as Strong-Arm ordered, an' again I didn't. Most of all I wanted to run away an' lose myse'f where neither o' them two vicious stiffs 'ud ever find me. I didn't know which way to toin——"

"So yuh stuck; eh, Chick boy?"

"Yes; for more'n an hour, long after it was dark. Every time Red 'ud groan as if he was comin' to, I'd give a yell and 'most jump outer my boots. But Red, he never seemed to git any more wide awake, so I finally got the spunk to slope. And I'm still beatin' it, Frisco, tryin' to find a place to hide until both them guys is outer these parts fer keeps."

"Aw, yuh don't need a be leary of Red, Chick. That old bum ain't worth a hill o' beans nowadays; he's soaked up too much whisky in his time."

"But Strong-Arm, Frisco. I'm skeered to death of Strong-Arm. I dream nights; I'm jumpy o' my own shadder. He tol' me to plug Red an' I didn't!"

"Aw, Chick-a-biddy, there's no use yer cryin'!" burst out the Frisco Kid at sight of the tears welling in the child's eyes. "Strong-Arm, he'll never come here again. He'll be afraid to."

He dropped his voice, glancing toward Miss Heffernan.

"It was him, Strong-Arm, what made her like that," he whispered. "He was here three nights ago an' he caused the death in her fambly. But don't ask me no more about it, Chick. She might hear and feel all thet sorrer over again."

"She 'pears to have plumb fergotten about me," remarked Chick, his voice

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suddenly wobegone. "I guess now I'll git no setdown like she promised me at the screen door."

"Aw, Chick!" reproved the Kid. "That's no fault of hern. She's all bruk up about that death in her fambly, like I done tole yer. You never had a death in the fambly, I'll bet, or yuh'd know. Why, if it wasn't fer me she wouldn't 'a' eaten anything these last three days. I've been Chinese cook an' Portugee bottle-washer round these diggin's all that time; an', say, she's even forgotten about *me!* Yes, an' Gay-Cat here what has stuck to her through it all like the thick-'n'-thin scout he is.

"But I'll give yer a setdown, Chick, a splendiferous setdown: baked beans what's warmin' in the oven, white bread, an' coffee 'n' pie. I got the pie myse'f down in Middletown today."

As the Kid went over to the stove to put on the pot of coffee and remove from the oven the warm crock of beans, Miss Heffernan looked up at him, her old dull eyes brightened and she said very tenderly:

"What are you fussing so about, Jerrold, dear? Isn't it 'most nine naow, time my boy should be abed?"

The Kid halted upstanding, suddenly sober. He struggled to speak, but could only make queer little noises in his throat. It was not the first time she had called him "Jerrold." She had addressed him by nothing else but that name for the past three days. She continued to look up at him now with a gentle smile on her thin lips.

"Aw, a-a-auntie!" he stammered at last. "Jes' a little while before bedtime, please. And I'm not fussin', r-r-really. I'm merely rustlin' up some warm beans an' bread 'n' coffee fer this little hungry Chick here. Ain't I doin' right, a-a-auntie?"

The soft brightness in her eyes mellowed into a wonderfully proud and possessive glow. Smiling on as if in some serene dream, she nodded.

"Of course, Jerrold, dear! Give him all the beans he can eat, pore child, and don't forget there's apple pie in the pantry. And have him sleep in your little bed with you, that's a good boy."

The Frisco Kid came back to Chick at the kitchen table, the crock of beans in his hands.

"She called yer Jerrold," whispered the urchin. "What does she mean by that?"

The Kid put a warning finger to his lips.

"Ssh, not now! We'll have a real honest-to-goodness gabfest up in my room later. I'll tell you all about it then."

AFTER they had tucked themselves in, within the little green-painted iron bed up in the attic room, the Frisco Kid fully explained to Chick the tragedy that had befallen Miss Heffernan. Chick returned the confidence by relating how he had come to direct his steps toward the house on the hill. After running away from Frisco Red he had met up along the road with a certain bold *rodeo* called the Crybaby Kid.

"I knows him," said the Frisco Kid. "He's a member of Portugee Kid's push—the youngest member."

"But no more, he isn't," qualified Chick. "He was ditched by Portugee 'cause he was makin' the whole bunch look like a kindergarten. Leastwise that's what I gathers. But he don't care none, he tol' me; says he's sorter glad to be on his own. But he's sore at 'em all jist the same, 'cause he's sure toined horstile to everybody. He's goin' in fer strong-arm work, he claims, an' he offers to lemme join out with him.

"Me, I toins him down cold, tellin' him how I'm fixed. He sees I'm jumpy o' my own shadder even though I've got a gat, so he offers to give me the low-down on a good hidin'-place providin' I'll pass over to him the big shootin'-iron of Strong-Arm's I'm totin'. He can use it in his rough work, he says. Myse'f I'm on'y too glad to get rid of the weapon. So then he ups and tells me to come here.

" 'You go to Miss Heffernan's,' he says. 'She'll take you in an' feed yer on dumplin's an' cornstarch puddin' an' jamocha cake, and let yer sleep in a little whitey bed up under the roof. She's allus been good to road-kids, an' she'll be 'specially good to a little 'fraid-cat like youse.

" 'An' you stay with her, Chick boy!' he says. 'Stay at Miss Heffernan's an' git off the Road. It's diff'rent with a tough kid like me, but the Road is no place fer a jumpy, shiverin' shrimp like youse. What you wants is a home, and that's jist what

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this Heffernan dame will give yer—a home with mush an' milk o' mornin's an' pancakes that 'ud knock yer eye out! She'll fall fer you right off. She'll wanta erdopt you soon's she sees yuh, you see if she don't. Why, she tried to erdopt me myse'f some time ago, but it warn't no use with a hard-boiled kid like me.' "

Chick was singularly talkative. He went on to say that he had never known a real home before. He had been raised in an orphan asylum in St. Louis. About the asylum were high stone walls which hid from view thoroughfares for street-cars and automobiles and sundry strollers. The boys of the asylum had come to know that these things lay beyond through acting the rôle of "peeping Toms."

There was a great door in one wall which was clear a few inches of the cement walk. On Sunday afternoons when the "orphs" were loosed in the front yard they used to take turns, so many at a time, lying flat on their stomachs and peering under that door at the passing mysterious shoes and wheels of the outside world. Many a long Sunday had Chick spent with his nose and eyes in close proximity to the cold pavement. Indeed, with the habit the outside world had become so fascinating that finally he had been led to steal furtively from the asylum one dark night, climb the great door and plunge into the glamour and mystery of the beyond.

Chick's words came more and more drawlingly until finally he began a sentence he was never to finish, heaved a prodigious sigh and fell to breathing slow and regularly. Beside him, in the little bed, the Frisco Kid remained stark awake, gazing up into the darkness. He could not sleep.

He remembered how they had filed out of the kitchen that night. Chick in the lead, Gay-Cat next and last of all himself. He had paused beside Miss Heffernan's rocker to bid her good night; he had found himself stooping down and kissing her. It was a shamefaced boyish kiss, a quick, birdlike peck, entirely unpremeditated; but what bothered him insistently now was how she had smiled over it, a mist flooding her old eyes.

"Poor Chick-a-biddy!" he breathed to the dark. "No fambly or nothin'! Gee, somethin's got to be done to make this his real honest-to-goodness home! Why, she hardly noticed him all evenin'!"

CHAPTER XX

A CRISIS

THE week went by with no visitors, either hoboesque or otherwise, calling at the house upon the hill. The Frisco Kid continued to do for himself and his Gay-Cat, for little silvery-haired Miss Heffernan and the tiny Chick. Then one day came a step on the gravel driveway, and while Chick fled into hiding up the attic stairs the Frisco Kid opened the kitchen screen door to Sheriff Kummer.

The moment he saw the official, the Frisco Kid guessed what was up. It proved to be exactly as he had surmised. The real Abraham Powers had finally appeared in Middletown and explained how he had been given "knockout drops" and been robbed of his paper of identification. Then Sheriff Kummer had hunted about for the man who had called himself Powers and who had killed Jerrold Michael Hagan; but that fellow had parted from the sheriff in the search for the escaped convict and all trace of him had been lost.

But the fruitless search had convinced the sheriff of several things. He believed that the false Abraham Powers had been instrumental in assisting Atlanta Slim to his getaway and also that there had been a hidden motive behind the slaying of Hagan. Finally Kummer had bethought himself to climb the hill and question the inhabitants of Miss Heffernan's clearing-house for hoboes.

He was inclined to be rather sharp and high-handed in his quizzing; but the Frisco Kid proved too much for him. He thrust himself before the apathetic old lady and artfully answered all queries. He seemed at that to know only half as much as the sheriff already surmised; he talked a great deal but in reality told very little. The sheriff finally banged out of the kitchen, disgruntled at the meagerness of what he had learned.

The Kid watched him walk round the house to the road. He could hardly contain himself from giving a great whoopee of delight. The sheriff had practically admitted, in the nature of his questions, that Atlanta Slim had successfully escaped and also that Strong-Arm had vanished completely from that part of the State. The Kid was on the point of darting from

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the kitchen to tell Chick that he need fear no longer the reappearance of Strong-Arm when Miss Heffernan called him to her side with the tenderly enunciated name—

"Jerrold!"

"Yes, auntie," he replied as he stood before her, respectfully waiting.

"I don't see that little road-youngster who has been here this past week. Has he gone off with the sheriff?"

"Aw, Miss Heffer—I mean, auntie! Why does yer say sech a thing! Chick hasn't left the house at all; he's up-stairs hidin' in the attic room. He's on'y ten, and he's been awful meanly treated, and he's leary of strangers comin', that's all. He don't intend to leave yer ever. He wants to stay on here with you an' me an' Gay-Cat."

"But I can't afford it, child."

Her listlessness dropped from her; a bitterness leaped to the eyes behind the coldly gleaming glasses; once again was she the tart schoolmarm type.

"I can't afford to feed three mouths besides my own with the little I earn from my dogs."

The Kid looked at her with frightened, terrible eyes, not knowing what to say. She bowed her head beneath his gaze, and her frail shoulders shook as if with soundless sobs.

"Oh, God 'a' mercy, what have I said!" she murmured. "I'm ashamed. I never was so mean-spirited and raspy before. But I guess—" and she lifted her thin, white face and smiled wearily at him—"I guess I must be getting stingy of you and Gay-Cat. I want us three to be alone here together."

The Kid understood. But it appalled him. He thought of the tiny tad hiding up-stairs, and he could say nothing, only wet his lips and gulp. He heard a low, miserable sobbing. Miss Heffernan had bowed her head again and he could see the pinkness of her scalp showing between the white, thin strands of hair. But the sobbing did not come from her.

He made across the kitchen toward the door into the dining-room. A clammy coldness was sheathing his limbs. He flung open the door. There, crouched on the threshold and sobbing as if his little heart would break, was the orphan, Strong-Arm's Chick. He had heard every cruel word spoken by Miss Heffernan.

"I wish I was daid," he sobbed out. "No fambly, no home, no nothin'. Oh, Frisco, I wish I was daid."

"Why—why—what's the matter?" stammered Miss Heffernan, suddenly aware of the presence of the little fellow and accordingly confused.

"It's Chick, ma'am," spoke up the Frisco Kid in a queer, gruff, oldish voice. "He overheard what you said. He wants to know why he can't stay on here forever—why you can't come to love him jest like you does Gay-Cat an' me."

"Aw, Miss Heffernan, ma'am!" broke out Chick wailingly. "I didn't mean no harm, honest I didn't. I never would 'a' battered yer back door if I thought yuh wouldn't 'a' wanted me. But Crybaby Kid, he tol' me yer would erdopt me soon's you saw me, an' I came on quick as a shot.

"But I guess it's all no use now, Miss Heffernan, an' no hard feelin's. You can't fall fer me 'cause you've already fallen fer Frisco an' his dorg; I see thet plain. But if yer don't mind, ma'am, I'll stay on fer one more good meal an' then I'll say *adios*, an' not bother you no more."

It was a crisis; a crisis which had been brewing ever since the appearance of Chick in the house; a crisis for which the Frisco Kid was unconsciously prepared. Now, his face very pale, the Kid reached down under the kitchen table, drew out Gay-Cat by his stiffened forelegs and gathered the dog up in his arms. Not looking at Miss Heffernan or the sobbing Chick, he started across the kitchen for the screen door, his eyes glassy with a kind of desperation.

But the little old maid got in his way. With a half-stifled cry of anguish she sprang afoot and barred his progress with outflung arms. The Kid stopped and seemed to cringe.

"Aw, lemme go, Miss Heffernan, ma'am!" he begged in a hard, metallic voice. "Yer been awful good to me—to me an' Gay-Cat—but it ain't right fer us to stay."

"Name o' goodness, child, what harm can have happened! Why act so tarnation queer and or'nary?"

He looked up at her, his face flaming crimson.

"Aw, can't yer see, ma'am? It's me was to blame fer all this sadness—yes, me what brought all this sorrer home to yer—me, the Frisco Kid, that was never nothin' but an unlucky mascot to nobody."

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"Tut, tut, child! What could you, a sweet-natured little——"

He turned on her fiercely.

"Aw, cut it, will yuh, ma'am! It's me what done it, jes' as I says. I knew all the time that Strong-Arm—I mean, Abe Powers—was a hard sort of guy an' had it in fer yer nephew Jerrold. I could 'a' told Sheriff Kummer on Strong-Arm an' saved yer nephew from gittin' murdered. But I didn't. I worked in with Strong-Arm to dô yer harm. Oh, I'm a hard-boiled an' or'nary kid, I tells yuh. I seed the mischief cookin' up an' I did nothin' to stop it."

It was all out. With the confession the Kid felt certain he had killed whatever of love Miss Heffernan might have cherished for him in her heart. He started forward again, stooped over his dog, circling round her toward the screen door.

She watched him go by her, arms at her side, seemingly unable to know what to think or do. She was sadly baffled. Then as he put hand on the knob of the screen door to leave her forever, a flush of blood suddenly suffused her thin, austere face and with a tiny squeal of joy she darted after him, gathered both boy and dog in her arms and hugged them tightly to her.

"Oh, you pert little muggins!" she exclaimed. "You *would* try to paint yourself black and bad in my eyes so's you could leave the field entirely to pore Chick. But 'tain't no use, child; I see it all naow; and Chick baby can stay on with us here and we'll make together one happy little family. Isn't that what you want, dear?"

The Kid hid his head in the crook of her arm. He was suddenly overcome with shame at having his motives thus quickly perceived. But manfully in muffled voice he asked:

"Aw, will yer, Miss Heffernan, auntie? Will yer adopt Chick along with us, the same as Crybaby said?"

"Will I!"

Miss Heffernan put the Kid upon his feet, darted over to the little, startled Chick, threw her arms about him and kissed his wan, tear-streaked, baby face. For the second time since his initial meeting with Chick the Frisco Kid had acted toward the tiny tad the rôle of savior. Like most rôles in life, that of savior demands more and more of sacrifice. The Frisco Kid had but just begun his task.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

CAME the last day of another week, Saturday. As had become his wont, the Frisco Kid bathed his dog in the briskness of the sunny April afternoon and then in the evening himself. After which he stood by and assisted little Chick in his weekly tubbing. Then the two boys appeared in the dining-room for Miss Heffernan's inspection, attired in the miniature bathrobes which the sweet old lady had purchased just for them in Middletown.

Miss Heffernan pulled down the spectacles from her forehead and carefully examined the Kid's ears and scrawny neck for unwashed places and soap-rings. Dutifully the Kid stood by her chair until she had done, then smiled with glowing pride at her sweet, warming words of commendation.

He leaned over and, unbidden, kissed her good night as he had done one memorable evening before. Then he motioned Chick forward to go through the same Saturday-night ritual.

Miss Heffernan smiled rather whimsically at the hesitating little Chick; her eyes became fixed on his pale, tiny, inchoate face, so full of shy curves and so pouting about the pure, babyish mouth. His mouth was open and innocent as a flower. She seemed to grow dismayed at the fascination its frail trusting loveliness held for her. She made a great effort, withdrew her gaze and pretended to give him as careful a looking-over as she had the Frisco Kid. Naturally, such was her effort, she overdid the thing.

"Law, laws, this will never do!" she cried in a shaky voice. "To see this pore child's neck and here behind the ears, one would think he'd never been in the tub at all!"

Chick trembled like a little, fearful dog.

"But there, child, we'll let it pass this time," she smiled quickly. "Only it's plain I can't trust you to young Jerrold any more. I'll have to wash you myself from now on or else you'll be a disgrace to me among all the folk of Middletown.

"Surely," she added with sudden thought, "no one can breathe a word of scandal about the old maid a-scrubbing you; you're only ten and but the teeniest, darlingest baby. Now kiss me good night, you trembly little dear."

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The Frisco Kid was not fooled the least bit. He knew it all for the most arrant sort of stall; for hadn't he himself washed Chick's ears and neck, and rubbed and scrubbed so there wouldn't be the slightest possible chance of the little fellow getting in wrong with Miss Heffernan on this, his first Saturday-night inspection?

The Kid's face glowed incandescently with joy. At last and in heaping measure Miss Heffernan had fallen for the tiny white-rabbity Chick!

Very soon then all the kerosene lamps were out and the woman of the house was asleep in her starchy white bed, a happy little smile on her thin, austere lips. Up in the rag-carpeted room he shared with the Frisco Kid and Gay-Cat, Chick talked on and on in a uniquely buoyant way, telling things that had occurred to him before he climbed the spiked gate and ran away from the "orphing" asylum in St. Louis.

But finally his words came drawlingly, his sentences grew disconnected, and there were long, drowsy pauses. At last one pause became so prolonged that the waiting Frisco Kid lifted his head. Chick was breathing slowly and regularly in deep sleep.

The Kid got up then from the little green-painted iron bed and dressed himself in his old hobo clothes—those overlarge cast-offs which he had worn before he had met up with Strong-Arm and become invested with the change of garniture for Atlanta Slim. In preparation for this night's adventure he must have secretly hidden away, several days before, the newly cleaned and pressed suit.

He went over to the box, padded with old clothes, where Gay-Cat slept like a top. Stooping, he gathered up the dog in his arms so gently that Gay-Cat only waked sufficiently to sense it was his buddie, then cuddled on his chest with his cold, wet nose against the Kid's neck.

"Good-by, Chick-a-biddy!" he whispered to the infantile figure beneath the blankets. "Be good to Miss Heffernan, little feller, an' she'll be adoptin' you in no time, now that we'se gone."

Something seemed to snap in the boy's throat. Huddled as with cold, the dog tightly held to him, he hurried down the stairs and along the dark, damp hallway. He came to a pause before Miss Heffernan's bedroom door. He leaned against that door, and not in his usual voice but in the hoarse broken tones of a weary old-timer murmured:

"Good-by, Miss Heffernan, ma'am. You've been awful good to us and I hates to go away like this, without no word of *adios;* but you'll be wise to why I did it an' on'y love Chick baby more! Good-by fer keeps, Miss Heffernan, ma'am—ye're an angel—but it's best fer you an' Chick."

PRESENTLY as the Kid opened the squeaking kitchen screen-door the briskness of the starry night roused the dog on his chest into life. The Gay-Cat squirmed over the boy's arm and dropped softly to the flight of rear steps. As the Kid turned the corner of the shadowy old building and walked on stealthy toes by the dim line of wire-meshed carriage sheds the dog bolted ahead, a vague rushing streak, wildly exultant now they were free of the house and once more on the go.

He was always that way, the Gay-Cat, mad with Gipsy delight whenever they started roaming. The long road was calling him now, and there was the irresistible allurement of brisk Spring mornings and sultry afternoons under drooping poplars beside languorous, green-bordered streams.

Gay-Cat seemed to feel the urge of the accursed *Wanderlust* even more than did the Frisco Kid. For the boy went with lagging, leaden feet down between the black yew hedges and, once out under the dim white sign, paused to look back.

When he turned about to continue on, the Kid experienced a great sinking of heart. For here, in the bald road, there awaited him no open-mouthed, eager Gay-Cat questioning with wagging tail and uptilted nose which way to take. The dog, in his incontainable exuberance, had lost himself somewhere ahead in the dark.

Suppose the little yellow mongrel should leave him some time for good and all, just as that very night he was abandoning Miss Heffernan and Chick without one honest open word of farewell. Ah, that would be too much after all the Kid had suffered in his hoboing through the world!

And then the dog was back like a stone from a catapult, leaping up and upon the lad, biting at his hands, entangling himself in his legs, acting altogether the darn fool of love. The long withheld tears started from the eyes of the boy and rolled slowly,

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one after the other, down his lean cheeks. How his Gay-Cat loved him! His own attachment to the dog was as nothing to the dog's terrible love for him. There was no one in the whole wide world who loved the Frisco Kid with the heart-breaking ardor of Gay-Cat—no one, that is, excepting——

The Frisco Kid turned bleak. He felt suddenly empty inside. For all at once he remembered a wistful, pale face framed in a shawl, a frail figure standing by a bush of white marguerites near a gate of picket-paling. While he watched her in the strange mind-picture she stretched out her yearning arms to him and called a name. That name was not "Frisco Kid."

It was his mother he saw, his little, graying mother up in Grass Valley. She had been waiting for him all these years.

He spoke a word to the Gay-Cat in a husky tone that instantly quieted the dog's ardors of love-making. Then together the two started down the hill toward sleeping Middletown. They drilled along in true hobo style, their shoulders slouched forward, their heads bent to the ruts in the road. But in the brain of the boy were unwinding distressful thoughts.

Suddenly he slackened his pace, and partly to himself, more to the dog, he said:

"Always movin', always movin' on. Gay-Cat, when we gets tired of bein' boes we'll go back to the valley and surprize my ma. But I guess—with a wistful smile—"you and me'll never get tired of bein' hoboes. We're blowed-in-the-glass stiffs, we are, and it's in our blood."

He looked up, on the sudden, from the dog and the ruts in the road to the stars overhead. The two, boy and dog, had paused almost at the bottom of the hill, and perhaps it was because the shadows were deeper here in the hollow that the stars overhead seemed so white and near. Indeed, one bright star there was that blinked like a tear-dimmed eye, and seemed to speak to the boy.

The Kid knew then. He was wearying of wandering. He would go back surely and soon to Her, to his little, pale mother waiting forever by that bush of white marguerites. The bright and tender star had told him that. There in the wide and empty night, he felt a great warming glow of pride that a star so high and radiant should send a message of heart's peace to one so lowly and so beaten.

SOME MORTUARY CUSTOMS OF NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

by **Hugh Pendexter**

SEVERAL years ago I hit upon a plot for an Indian story in which the theme pivoted on an aquatic burial. Before writing the yarn I refreshed my recollection of the North American Indian's mortuary customs, and found in Dr. H. C. Yarrow's excellent article on that subject—First Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology—that the author had been able to find in all his research work only two authenticated aquatic and semi-aquatic burials. One dealt with the Gosh-Utes, who had buried their dead in springs of the Skull Valley, in the Great Salt Lake desert; and George Catlin's description of canoe-burial of infants among the Chinooks. As my story was not intended to deal with either of these people it was never written.

The form of burial most generally observed among the Indians was interment in the ground, in graves, holes, caves, or under the wigwam, lodge or cabin. The Mohawks dug a large, circular hole and placed timbers over it and made a mound of earth over the timbers. "Schoolcraft" says the corpse was dressed in its finery, that wampum was placed in the grave and that the relatives would not allow grass or weeds to grow on the mound.

The Carolina tribes used coffins made of reeds. The dead was extolled in a funeral oration and represented as being very happy in the spirit land. The Sacs and Foxes were careful that no earth should touch the body of their dead. The Creeks and Seminoles buried their dead under a cabin, or rock, wherever he died, according to "Schoolcraft." The family at once desert the house under which he is buried, as the bones of their dead were always attended by goblins.

The Otoe and Missouri tribes dug graves wider at the bottom than at the top and hung the sides with blankets. A pony was

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killed so the deceased might gallop away to the happy-hunting grounds. The Arizona Pimas displayed the same aversion to having the earth touch the body of their dead and guarded against it by digging a hole five feet deep and then at one side hollowing out a small vault large enough to hold the corpse.

The Pueblo, Wichitas, and Caddoes buried in graves. The Wahpeton and Sisseton Sioux since 1860 have made use of graves—aerial or tree burial being the custom before that date. But before and after 1860 a murdered person was always buried in the ground, face down, head toward the south with a piece of bacon in the mouth. The bacon was to prevent the spirit of the dead from scaring the game from the country around the grave. The Coyotero Apaches indulged in very little formality in consigning their dead to the earth, often using cavities left by removing a rock or a stump.

Stone graves have been found in Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois and Idaho. Yarrow says the graves in Tennessee were almost identical with those of men of the reindeer period in France, opened by him in 1873. Mound burial was anciently common, some of the mounds containing chambers. The excavation of a mound near John's River, Burke County, North Carolina, revealed three Indians each seated at a rock, one in the east, west and south, and none in the north. Descendants of the first owners of the farm had held possession of the field containing the grave for more than a hundred and fifty years.

The excavation was made by Dr. J. Mason Spainhour of Lenoir, N. C., and Yarrow, vouching for his accuracy as an observer, states the facts given by him "may not be doubted." In concluding his report Doctor Spainhour says in part:

"The facts set forth will doubtless convince every Mason, who will carefully read the account of this remarkable burial, that the American Indians were in possession at least of some of the mysteries of our order, and that it was evidently the grave not only of Masons, but the three highest officers in a Masonic lodge as well. The grave was situated due east and west, the altar was erected in the center; the south, west and east were occupied—the north was not; implements of authority were near each body.

"The difference in the quality of beads, the tomahawks in one, two and three pieces, and the difference in distance that the bodies were placed from the surface, indicated beyond doubt that these three persons were buried by Masons. Will some learned member unravel the mystery and inform the Masonic world how the Indians obtained so much of this sort of information?"

The Chickasaws, Navahos, certain California tribes, extinct Louisiana tribes, as well as some of the early tribes in Virginia, buried beneath cabins or wigwams. Practically every state in the Union has furnished examples of cave-burial. Embalming and mummification were also practised, the latter in connection with cave burials.

The Santees of South Carolina are said to have practised partial embalming, but placed their dead in boxes elevated on sticks above the ground rather than in caves. The Mound-Builders practised urn-burial, according to discoveries made in the southern states and in Missouri. In Foster's "Pre-historic Races," the finding of skulls larger than the opening of the jars which contained them is likened to a similar process used by the Chaldeans.

Surface burial was practised by some of the Iroquois, some of the Sacs and Foxes, the Potawatomi, Ojibways and Swampy Crees, Canada. Cairn-burial among Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevada Indians, including the Shoshones of Nevada, Pi-Utes of Oregon, Blackfeet, Yaquis of Mexico and the Eskimo. Some of the Indians on the west slopes of the Rockies used cremation, while partial cremation was practised by the Cherokees at times by some of the aborigines in what is now Florida, and by some of the California tribes.

Aerial burial was common among the Sioux, Crows, Blackfeet, Cheyennes, Navahos, and Yukon River tribes. Under this head is included burial in lodges, scaffolds, canoes, in trees, etc. To the list may be added the Gros Ventres, Mandans and Chippewas. Where a name of a tribe is repeated it means more than one form of burial was practised by the same people. The customs of mourning, dancing, singing, feasting and superstitions attending burial would fill a large volume.

It is a fallacy to think the Indian warrior was always buried with his head toward the east. In various tribes, and sometimes in the same tribe, the head was toward the west and the south. Many tribes placed their dead in a sitting posture; many did not.

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"LIEUTENANT SCARTH The Man Who—"

by Thomson Burtis

Author of "Dumpy Puts One Over," "The Winning Chance," etc.

LIEUTENANT ROBERT SCARTH, known to his fellow pilots of the Army Air Service by the highly descriptive cognomen "Dumpy," was a paradoxical young gentleman. He was short, fat, soft-looking, and yet he was admitted to have few equals and only one possible superior as a flyer. Inasmuch as he was flying on border patrol along the Rio Grande, which patrol includes some of the best pilots in the service, that estimate means much.

He was probably the most naively conceited man regarding flying who ever handled a stick, and was one of the excessively few braggarts in any profession who could at all times make good on his self-adulating conversation. Finally, despite his conceit, he was popular with his fellows. Before one got to know the real Dumpy, the fat little pilot would be an affliction to have around. Later one found out that he was the best-natured, most impulsively generous chap in the world—that he would go to —— and back for a friend, and then talk about what a wonderful trip he had made to everybody who would listen.

His flying was the only thing that went to his head. He never talked about his really fine musical ability; Dumpy could tease a wicked rag out of a piano, strum a mean ukulele, and possessed a high sweet tenor voice that had been a hundred-dollar-a-week meal ticket to him in civilian life, but these accomplishments never were subjects for his self-praise. However, when flying was mentioned Dumpy would start by admitting that he was the best in the world and keep on trying to prove it as long as anybody would listen.

He could keep the whole Marfa Flight listening to him sing some rollicking ditty to his own accompaniment on the ukulele, but he had rather keep one Mexican gaping wonderingly at his flying eccentricities. As Hinkley, his sardonic observer, was wont to remark:

"If three people are watching Dumpy fly, my life isn't worth the change of a nickel. He'd kill us both to get a stickful of type in the San Antonio *Express*."

Dumpy would not have been Dumpy if he had not been dreaming of possible achievements that would make his name a household word, as he sat in the operation-room at McMullen. With eleven other airmen, brought together from Sanderson, McMullen and Marfa, he was waiting to hear Captain Kennard's instructions for the special duty the little group had been gathered to perform. They were a hand-picked bunch. Lanky, homely "Hub" Chester was the holder of a world's record; Jimmy Jennings of McMullen was credited with four boches in the big scrap; "Tex" MacDowell had wrested from Dumpy himself the status of premier all-round flyer on the border, and Captain Kennard, who was to lead the flight, was a D. S. C. man with an overseas record that had brought him his rank.

The captain finished his low-voiced conversation with MacDowell and as he arose from the desk and faced his flyers the hum of conversation died. The captain was short and stocky; his face deeply lined.

"I presume you all have some idea as to why you have been gathered together," he began. "For the benefit of those of you who have not heard details, I will say this. The storm night before last, that created so

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much havoc even here, was a veritable hurricane down on the coast. A tidal wave wiped out the business section of Corpus Christi completely, as well as some little towns along Nueces Bay. MacDowell flew down there yesterday. The present estimate is six hundred people dead. Trains can not run, wires are down, boats all along the gulf wrecked, food scarce, and all the conditions accompanying a disaster of that magnitude can be found there.

"On the mainland around the bay hundreds of people are marooned. Our mission is to fly regular patrols, drop food and water to these survivors, and in general make ourselves useful. There is no question that we can save many lives. Due to the large number of dead bodies floating in the bay, sharks are numerous. MacDowell says that many bodies are being washed ashore more than half-eaten away. When we make these patrols we will be flying low over the water. If the motor cuts out, there will be nothing to do but come down in the bay and swim for it. Is there any man that does not care to make the trip?"

His words had been matter of fact, cold. As he swept the little gathering with his eyes the captain smiled a little, his homely but attractive face lighting up warmly.

"I thought not. You men were gathered together under orders from Department Headquarters, because you were considered the best men available for the job. Tex picked a field for us to land in, but it is muddy and water-soaked. Taking off and landing will be difficult—you must watch your step every minute. Your ships will all be ready after dinner——"

He turned to Tex, lately made engineer officer of the McMullen Flight. The tall, lounging pilot nodded.

"All of 'em will be warming up by the time we finish lunch," he drawled.

"We can discuss the detail of our work after we get there. One thing may be of interest to you," said the C. O. "Dave Ransom and his wife, Natalie, are down at Corpus Christi on their honeymoon. Tex heard that Dave had been in town during the storm, but could not locate him. Natalie must have stayed out at the cottage. I guess most of you know Dave, and all of you Natalie. I won't need to ask you to keep your eyes peeled while you are on patrol. We're hoping they lasted through all right, but no telling."

The dinner-gong, smitten lustily by the fat chink cook, sounded as he finished speaking.

"Let's go," said the captain, and led the way to the mess-hall adjoining.

"I sure am sorry to hear that Ransom and Natalie are down there," remarked Hub Chester. "How did that kid ever carry off the belle of the border, anyway?"

"It's a gift," retorted Tex MacDowell.

"He's having an eventful life since he hit the border, isn't he?"

"Sure is," chimed in Dumpy as he sailed into the steak and French fried potatoes. "He got a lot of publicity out of that fire in the air you and he had, Tex. Probably that helped him marry Natalie. She sure is a peach."

"Wrong, Dumpy my boy," returned Tex. "He had asked the question and she had made the proper answer before it happened. I suppose when you saw the newspaper accounts of that fire you were sorry you didn't have it, weren't you?"

"Oh, I've had 'em!" returned Dumpy characteristically. "Why say, I——"

Hinkley, without cracking a smile, placed his hand over the mouth of his fat pilot.

"The narrow escapes and hair-raising stunts of your past career are of practically no interest to us, Dumpy. Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you may dive into the bay."

"Dumpy'd make a sweet morsel for a shark," said Captain Kennard from the head of the table.

OUT on the field the first De Haviland got going on the warm-up, and as the roar came through the open windows the twelve men around the table forgot to talk and settled down to the business of eating. Their thoughts turned to their mission and took on a distinctly personal tinge as Ransom and his bride entered them. Ransom, a young observer, had recently married the daughter of Colonel Brewster, C. O. of the McMullen Cavalry Post.

Captain Kennard, with the memory of Colonel Brewster's broken voice over the wire that morning, spoke his thoughts aloud.

"When I get thinking about those two we know it gives me some idea of what a couple of thousand people down there must be going through right now," he said.

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"Sure is ——," said Tex MacDowell. "There are a lot of things that go along with it that help pile up the misery, too. The whole town stinks with decaying flesh, and I wouldn't be surprized at an epidemic of some kind. They let all the jailbirds out to save their lives, except 'Reddy' Connors, and there is a lot of looting."

"Reddy Connors! Not that bird that ran for a while with Jesus Rentaria?" asked Dumpy.

"Read the papers, you ignorant whisky tenor. Didn't you know that Connors had to leave Mexico when the new administration came in, and that he was caught for the murder of some prominent man in Corpus Christi? He was robbing the house, I think. Anyway, they have him locked up in the town hall. The rest of the jailbirds, and Corpus has a lot in the Summer when its full, are out."

Reddy Connors was an American with Mexican blood in him who had fled into Mexico as the result of a killing at Candelaria some months before. He had attained unsavory notoriety as a member of Rentaria's bandit gang. That same gang had been responsible for the capture of Davidson and Marsh, two flyers who had been held for ransom under threat of death, so that the airmen were particularly interested in his fate.

The conversation became about equally divided between the Ransoms and the notorious Connors, but Dumpy took little part. His thoughts ran ahead to the newspaper reports that would eventually go out to the world from Corpus Christi, and in them he knew the work of the Air Service would bulk large. In his mind's eye the words, "Lieutenant Robert Scarth, the man who—" assumed much prominence.

He had always striven to attain the place where people would whisper to their neighbors and say, "There goes Scarth!" when he walked into a hotel lobby or down a theater aisle. Even the circumstances surrounding this flight to Corpus Christi could not entirely turn his mind from its customary channel. He would work as hard, probably a little harder than the others, but he would not have been the well-known Dumpy Scarth if he had not thought considerably about the public recognition that would follow. As for the danger involved—that really meant less than nothing to him.

Outside the warming motors of six De Havilands filled the air with a drumming roar that made conversation impossible. The airmen hastily finished their meal, donned leather coats and helmets, and made for their ships. Dumpy and Hinkley climbed in the cockpits of the black D. H. with the white hood which had carried them through many an eventful moment. Dumpy watched and labored with that ship with a love for it that was almost personal. He called it *Abigail* for some unknown reason, and had been known to converse with, pray to, and swear at *Abigail* as if the lady could hear him. No other flyer ever touched the stick and no mechanic worked on *Abigail* except under Dumpy's careful supervision.

He checked his instruments casually—he knew they would be right—and then tried out his motor. It roared wide open, straining at the wheel-blocks, while he cut first one switch and then the other, retarded the spark, and watched the gages. The McMullen mechanic who had been warming it up leaned over the cockpit to watch, likewise. Slowly Dumpy throttled down until the motor was idling gently.

"All right, sir?" asked the mechanic before jumping off the step.

Dumpy nodded.

"Take away the blocks," he commanded.

This done, he sat quietly awaiting the take-off signal from Captain Kennard. Down the line the other five ships were idling, motionless leather-covered figures in the cockpits waiting the signal.

The end ship sprang into life as Captain Kennard took off. His wheels off the ground, he banked sharply, and as he did so Tex MacDowell, with George Hickman in the back seat, sent his ship swiftly over the ground. Jimmy Jennings and Beaman followed, then Hub Chester with Captain Miles, a flight surgeon from Laredo, flying with him. Pete Miller and Binder, flying number five, were next and Dumpy brought up the rear. He held his ship close to the ground until it swept within ten feet of the hangars on the far side of the field. As they came close he pulled back steeply and brought his ship over them, almost scraping the roof. Sarcastic, lanky old Hinkley in the rear seat smiled wearily and never turned a hair. He had flown three hundred hours of border patrol with Dumpy.

In single file the six ships circled the tiny airdrome, until by means of cutting the

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circle the stragglers had caught up and were spaced evenly. The lead ship dived slightly and pulled up in a steep zoom. That meant "get in formation."

Captain Kennard throttled to fifteen hundred and Tex MacDowell gave his ship the gun, moving up until he was fifty feet back of the captain, and half that much to one side. He slowly throttled and the momentum he had generated by using full throttle slid him into formation position.

The others moved up into their places—each ship twenty-five feet back, as far to one side, and about ten feet higher than the ship immediately ahead, all sighting by means of the center section struts. When the pilot of a formation ship is in such position that the two diagonal center section struts of the plane ahead are exactly lined up, appearing as one strut, he knows his ship is in perfect formation.

Dumpy had the most difficult position of all to fly. When the first five planes were in position, Captain Kennard leading and the other four divided two on a side, Dumpy shoved on the throttle and ruddered into position directly behind Captain Kennard. Sighting by means of the lead ship, and also by the rear ships on each side of the V, Dumpy slowly moved into a position where he was ten feet above the two rear ships, about twenty-five feet back of them, and directly behind Captain Kennard in line of flight.

The infinitely delicate use of throttle and controls needed to gain and maintain his position was a test for any pilot and Dumpy handled his ship with the perfect judgment and instinctive knowledge of speed and distance that mark the natural-born flyer. Formation is the final test of accurate, nervy flying. Ships weighing over a ton and a half, with sixty feet of wing-spread, traveling at a hundred miles an hour and only twenty-five feet apart, need masterly handling.

There are no brakes to apply if that twenty-five-foot interval grows less. The flyer must realize before the space lessens that his ship has gained speed and cut the throttle a trifle to compensate. If he cuts it the merest trifle too much, that space will grow larger, the man behind him will be thrown out, and in the hands of any but the most expert the formation will degenerate into continuous overcontrol that will keep it ever shifting instead of smoothly accurate.

That elongated diamond of De Havilands, winging their way to the gulf, was evidence ini tself that the Air Service was sending its best to the aid of the stricken city.

DUMPY, flying his ship by instinct, had been peering over the side almost continuously during the last fifty miles of the hundred-mile trip. The tight-fitting helmet and big goggles gave an irresistibly humorous impression of perfect, owl-like rotundity to his face. Usually Hinkley was wont to gaze at his pilot often and grin at the picture he made, but on this trip he had no eyes for anything but the ground, and peered down as interestedly as Scarth.

Fields under water—houses forming islands in the midst of wide-spreading, shallow ponds—little knots of people gathered on higher clumps of ground—carcasses of dead cattle—all were parts of the picture which grew more desolate as the lowlands near the gulf were reached. Corpus Christi itself capped the climax. As the formation circled the town, Dumpy forgot himself and what opportunities for glory awaited him, drawing his breath wonderingly at the shambles two thousand feet below.

Half of the famous Summer resort presented a picture of utter destruction. The business section of town, a mile square, was a solid mass of wreckage, gaunt high buildings piercing it like spectral girders in a great unfinished building. The beach around Nueces Bay, as far as the flyers could see, was rimmed with a band of flotsam and jetsam thrown up by the sea. The boathouses, dancing-pavilions, and bungalows that had lined the beach for a half-mile either side of the town were no more.

Dumpy awoke from his trance as he felt Hinkley's hand gripping his shoulder. Hinkley pointed ahead and Dumpy saw the lead ship rocking from side to side—the signal to break formation. Dumpy did not change position until one by one the ships ahead got into single file. Then he gave his D. H. the gun and caught up with them, falling into position on the rear of the line.

Like participants in a game of follow-the-leader the line of ships dived behind Captain Kennard. At two hundred feet the lead ship straightened out and began circling a long narrow field marked with a landing T. It was plain that the field was very wet. The carcasses of three animals,

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evidently dragged to one side of the field, could be seen plainly, and at one end of the fenced pasture the wreck of a barn was strewed about. Twenty-five or more men were gathered at one side and still more were carrying something from two trucks drawn up on a road that ran alongside.

Captain Kennard circled down and landed, the rest of the flyers circling still. The captain's ship threw a thin but plainly discernible spray of water and mud as it stalled down. As he taxied to the fence at one side, where the men were, Tex MacDowell started down. In order the others followed, each one landing after the man ahead was safely out of the way.

There were fully fifty people in all to watch Dumpy land, so Hinkley, grinning sardonically, waited to see what Dumpy would figure out to give them a thrill.

Instead of stalling in slowly and "pancaking" down in the mud, Dumpy went far back, and dived steeply at an angle that made him level out fully a hundred yards before his ship reached the boundary fence. Although the Liberty was idling, the big ship sped over the ground, three feet high, straight for the fence. As he reached it he pulled back slowly. The ship went up in the air and over the fence, losing speed almost instantly due to the low-throttled motor. Ten feet in the air the nose was still pointed up, and the De Haviland was practically stalled. A quick thrust at the throttle and the motor roared for an instant, just enough to keep the nose up as the ship settled the ten feet to the ground. It lighted hard, but on three points.

As Dumpy taxied to where the other ships were lined up Tex MacDowell turned to Captain Kennard.

"Ain't nature wonderful?" he inquired, looking down from his six-feet-two to meet the eyes of the stocky C. O.

"The bravest man in the world," returned the captain cryptically, "is one Larry Hinkley."

With eager civilians on each wing to help him Dumpy brought his black-and-white ship into line, and cut the motor by means of turning off the gas pet-cocks and then the switches to prevent back-fire or plug-fouling. Dumpy was crazy in the air, but wise in the ways of motors. He and Hinkley climbed out and splashed their way through the puddles toward the other flyers, who were now the center of an eager group of haggard, unshaved men.

Dumpy wrinkled up his pug nose disgustedly.

"Good ——, what a stench!"

"Isn't any huckleberry," agreed Hinkley. The air was permeated with the odor of decaying flesh.

The group of men, all armed, were asking eager questions of the flyers as to what they had seen on their trip down. Many of them had relatives in the back country—others were beseeching the flyers to look up this and that place to see if any one was alive. They had come out with gasoline for the ships and had been carrying it from the trucks to the field in big drums. Tex MacDowell had arranged for it the day before.

A stocky young fellow who looked as if he had not shaved for three days nor slept for as long was standing beside Dumpy and Hinkley on the outskirts of the group.

"Corpus sure has been ruined, hasn't it?" said Hinkley.

"Right. And most of the people in it, too," returned the other.

"Is the estimate still six hundred dead?"

"Been raised a little now, I think. Bodies are being washed up all the while. We have a gang of men working day and night digging graves —not even identifying the bodies now."

With several men talking at once, the flyers heard something of the true extent of the disaster. One man had lost his whole family; another who had owned a garage had had the whole thing washed away, with fifteen brand new cars ruined; still another had not seen his wife since the night of the storm and did not know whether she was alive or dead. They talked with a sort of dazed detachment, eyes strained and tongues often mumbling from fatigue, that was horrible. Many of them, whose homes were in smaller towns near by or on farms in the lowlands around the bay, had no idea as to whether their families or possessions were safe or not, but the chances were they were not.

A BATTERED Ford bounced and rattled up the muddy road and stopped beside the field. Two men in uniform got out. The smaller of the two vaulted the fence and ran toward the knot of men in front of the ships.

"Dave Ransom!" yelled Captain Kennard,

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and the group split to allow him to go through. "How are you, boy—and Natalie?"

In muddied, torn uniform, minus his observer's wing, his face lined with worry and fatigue, it seemed as if Ransom had aged ten years since he had left MacMullen. There was no trace of the slim, boyish chap who had left them two weeks before.

"——! But I'm glad to see you all," he said huskily. He had one of MacDowell's hands and one of Captain Kennard's and continued to pump them up and down.

"Is Natalie all right, Dave?" asked Tex.

The other flyers looked at Ransom eagerly.

"I don't know, Tex, and I'd give my hopes of heaven if I did!"

His sensitive face, smudged and sallow, twisted with pain.

"I came over to town to get some stuff that afternoon, and the cursed thing came up so suddenly I couldn't get back. Natalie is about ten miles away from here, on the east coast. There was a little food in the house, and an old nigger mammy—you know, Colonel Brewster's cook—is with her. The bungalow is fairly high, but it's right on the edge of the bay."

His voice was strained and husky. He looked at the captain in painful suspense as he asked—

"How soon do you suppose I can hear something about her, captain?"

"In ten minutes, old-timer, if the captain says the word," announced Dumpy. "Let me take off and hike over there, will you, captain? In fact, we've all got plenty of gas yet—two hours' worth—and even if the food-bags and water-bottles aren't ready we can all look over the land and maybe do some good. We can bring back a lot of news for these folks, too." He nodded at the eagerly listening civilians.

"Pardon me, I'm Major Sims, Cavalry, from Fort Roe."

"Glad to know you, sir. Kennard is my name."

The captain shook hands with the tall, broad-shouldered major, who had accompanied Ransom.

"I'm sure glad to see you fellows. The town is under martial law, and I am in command. I was here on leave when the storm broke."

"We are under your orders, sir. For any service we can perform in addition to flying we hope you will call——"

"Thank you. I think it would be an excellent thing to make a short patrol this afternoon to look over the land, spot any survivors you can, and so forth. The message-bags, food-sacks and water-bags are nearly completed; several women have been working on them and they will be ready for your use tomorrow. Up to now we haven't even had any boats in commission to use for communication with people who may be stranded in the bay or back in the lowlands. One or two, we hope, will be ready tonight."

The major turned from Captain Kennard and swept the group of flyers with a keenly appraising look.

"The whole town is under a regular guard system," he said, turning again to Captain Kennard. "Most of the men have been without much sleep for two days. Could your officers take a six-hour tour as officers in charge of districts—say from midnight to six tomorrow morning?"

"Sure thing, major."

"Good. I suggest that you do not go out on patrol this afternoon yourself, captain, but return to town with me so that we can discuss details. Oil and gas are already out here and a detail of men to help you with the ships. Will six be enough?"

"Plenty. All right, you fellows, help each other crank your ships and start off. Don't stay over an hour. Major, I guess you know this country better than I; will you assign sectors for each man to cover?"

In a few minutes their routes had been assigned. Dumpy and Hinkley, at Dumpy's request, had secured the sector which took in the eastern shore of Nueces Bay, which would include Ransom's bungalow. Jimmy Jennings and stout Dr. Miles helped start the motor and the black-and-white ship was the first to warm up.

Ransom had begged to go but had been dissuaded. Dumpy promised that he would fly back over the field and rock the ship for good news, zoom if the house had been damaged and Natalie not observable, and fly straight if there was no news. By no news he meant no sign of Natalie, but the house in good condition and no observable reason why Natalie should not be safe.

Several civilians guided the ship by means of the wings as it taxied through the mud and turned around at the end of the field, which was about four hundred yards long and fifty yards wide. The other pilots

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watched interestedly to see how the muddy ground would affect the take-off.

Dumpy adjusted his goggles and turned to Hinkley in the rear seat.

"Ready, Hink?"

Hinkley nodded and Dumpy slowly shoved on the throttle. The wheels dug deep in the mud, but gradually picked up momentum as the great propeller bit the air on full throttle. Half the length of the field, and still the ship would not go off. Ahead loomed a deep mud-puddle—possibly ooze so deep that it would slow the wheels and wreck the ship. Dumpy jerked back on the stick and the ship responded, hopping the puddle, but bouncing on the other side. Luckily it was comparatively dry there, and the ship hopped five feet in the air. Like a flash Dumpy eased forward on the stick, and then held it so the slowly moving ship just stayed off the ground.

For a moment it seemed that the ship would stall and flop back to the ground again, but the little pilot jockeyed it, with barely enough speed to stay in the air, and succeeded in keeping it off the ground. Gradually it picked up flying speed, and in a triumphant zoom Dumpy lifted it over the ruins of the barn and turned toward the bay.

As he swooped over the littered town hundreds of people stopped in their tracks to watch him pass. It was the concrete evidence of help from the outside world, and to the marooned populace it was the harbinger of hope. They were not to fight their battle entirely alone.

Dumpy nosed down the ship and swept the highest church steeple with only a few feet to spare. Ordinarily he would have stopped long enough to have circled it at least for the benefit of his audience, but the memory of Ransom's haggard face and of Natalie out there in the desolate regions around the bay, was clear in the pilot's mind.

He did not even glance at the acres of wreckage below, but with his four hundred horse-power Liberty turning up seventeen hundred revolutions a minute he roared out over the bay.

His ship and motor were working perfectly. That ship was the pride of his heart, and the hours of work that he put in on it every week showed in the smoothly firing motor and the gage needles which stood motionless, all recording exactly what they should—oil, air, temperature.

Both pilot and observer had careful data about the cottage from Ransom; it was just around the point which jutted into the bay. Dumpy did not even look down at the mud-died, filth-splotched waters of the bay a thousand feet below, nor did he think of what would happen if the Liberty went bad. Hinkley, in the rear seat, looked impassively at the bloated bodies of both animals and human beings that floated below. He could not see any living people clinging to rafts, although once he thought he saw an arm or a leg move off to one side of their course. The body was lying limply along a great beam that floated half-submerged. He signaled Dumpy, pointing to it. They circled several times, but could discern no signs of life below.

They resumed their course over the point and in a moment swept in sight of a little white cottage set on top of a hill that rolled up from the beach. As they sighted it, three miles ahead, Dumpy turned with a wide grin and Hinkley raised his hands and clapped joyfully. The house at least was there.

As they came closer Dumpy nosed down, throttle full on, and at a hundred and forty miles an hour they approached it. The line of wreckage cast up by the water was fully a hundred yards down the hill from the house.

Leaning out to one side, fighting the terrific air-pressure of their speed and the propeller blast, Dumpy kept diving, planning to fly past the house low to the ground so that they could see as much as possible. With a wild whoop of joy he turned to Hinkley and pointed. It was unnecessary —Hinkley had already seen the two feminine figures waving madly from the porch. Natalie was safe.

They rushed past the house and as Hinkley pushed up his goggles and waved Dumpy let off some of his exuberance by pulling up in a dangerously steep climbing turn that sent him over the house. Five minutes later he was rocking his ship from one ninety-degree bank to another over the field. Down below he could not pick up Ransom, who, after one look at the wild antics above, had crumpled down in the mud, his head in his hands and tears of relief coursing unashamed down his face. Captain Kennard's steady hand was on his shoulder.

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AN HOUR and a half later the last ship had pancaked down into the field and was in its proper place in line along the fence. All the flyers brought back substantially the same story. Lowlands under water, groups of people gathered on the higher spots, beach lined with flotsam and jetsam that included many bodies, cattle standing patiently up to their bellies in water as much as ten miles back of the shore.

Tex MacDowell, who had flown straight over the bay and out to the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico, reported a little group of people on a raft. Pete Mills had seen a body about half-eaten by sharks, flung up on a pile of rocks on the western edge. Jimmy Jennings and Binder, his observer, reported the town of Rockville, a hamlet on the coast, under what looked to be at least six feet of water, not a living soul responding when they flew low over it. All the observers had noted on paper the location of people who would need food and water.

All the automobiles in the city that were running had been commandeered and three were waiting to bear the flyers into town. Three times everybody piled out and helped dislodge their conveyances from mud-holes in the road. As they drew into the outskirts of the town proper the sickening stench of death and decay increased in strength. Cars piled with food and clothing passed them, and barefoot women and children dressed fantastically in everything from kimonos to overalls grew more frequent. Bricks from chimneys and fallen telegraph poles lined the streets, but only the hurricane had got in its work up on the heights. It was the business-section below, built on the lowlands near the water, that had been completely demolished.

The cavalcade of cars drew up in front of the town hall as Captain Kennard, Ransom and the major came down the steps. A continuous stream of men, women and children was filing in and out of the big stone structure. Its tower had been blown down, but otherwise it had stood the storm well. The tidal wave had not reached so high—it was built on the crest of the terrace that divided the town. At the foot of the terrace was the business section of the town, now a tangled mass of torn buildings, overturned automobiles, and the contents of stores which had been gutted by the wave that had literally swamped all of Corpus Christi that was built below the seventy-foot hill. The residential section, almost entirely located on top of the hill, had escaped comparatively easily. Bungalows that had been built along the beach were complete wrecks—many of them had been picked up and flung bodily from their foundations, drumpling in the process.

The flyers had but little time to take in the sight for they were engulfed by eager men and women. They escaped as soon as possible, following Captain Kennard and Major Sims inside the town hall, which housed relief headquarters as well as the heads of the martial administration. They gathered in Major Sims' temporary office.

"The town has been divided into guard sections—as it happens, just twelve of them. Each section is guarded day and night by six guards, and each section likewise has an officer in charge. Each of you gentlemen will have one of these sections, going on from midnight to six o'clock. The guard details form here."

The major turned to Captain Kennard.

"I see your men brought Colts and holsters along. Have they plenty of ammunition?"

"Yes, sir; eight clips apiece."

"Good. We are very shy of it. Now gentlemen, this guard matter is a serious one. Shoot at sight any one attempting to loot. We have already shot four looters—three Mexicans and one white man—and hanged one negro for attempted assault. To make matters worse, all the prisoners in the jail, except one, were released during the storm to save their lives. This one prisoner—the only important criminal in the jail—was the notorious Reddy Connors, as you probably know from the newspaper accounts of his capture. He held up Mr. John Seely and shot him in cold blood when the old man resisted.

"We didn't know down here that the police had captured the famous Connors until the day after he was arrested for Mr. Seely's murder. No one had any idea Connors was around here. Rangers from Austin were on their way down here after him when the storm broke and their train was stopped at Beeville.

"Well, Connors escaped this morning. He was locked up here in the town hall. One of his guards, completely worn out, had fallen asleep and Connors killed the other guard by mashing his skull with a

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table-leg. He is over six feet tall, has red hair and walks with a limp. He has a scar running all the way across his forehead. Shoot him on sight.

"You will report here tonight at 11:30, and each of you will be given special instructions by the night provost marshal covering your special district. You will all sleep in the morgue, upstairs in this building."

The major, who had been talking with crisp finality, relaxed as he uttered the final sentence, and his tired eyes twinkled. He laughed aloud as Tex asked gently—

"Has this morgue all the—er—modern improvements?"

"Blankets, anyway," returned the major. "Now, Captain Kennard, you can take up the arrangements about patrols and courier service."

It did not take long. Five ships were to patrol morning and afternoon, the sixth to fly trips back and forth between San Antonio and Corpus Christi carrying news to the outside world and messages as to things specially needed in the relief train that would come through from San Antonio when the railroad washouts were repaired. The pilot on this trip would make it alone, leaving the back seat free for carrying much-needed surgical supplies. Flying sectors were assigned. The observers would drop food-bags and water-containers where needed. Some were equipped with floats for the use of people found floating in the bay. A message-bag containing a note would be dropped first explaining a simple visual signal system whereby the people on the ground could let the airmen know whether they needed anything, and just what it was. Pete Mills drew duty as courier for the next day.

"Now we'll go down to the church next door, where we'll get something to eat. Then I guess you fellows had better beat it to bed and get some sleep. We'll call you at 11:30," said the major.

"From church to morgue is rather reversing the usual procedure, isn't it?" grinned Tex.

As they went down-stairs Dumpy was kept busy answering Ransom's unceasing flow of questions about Natalie. The young observer looked like a different being now—the drawn lines in his face had disappeared, and only fatigue remained.

"Yes, we just swooped down right over the lawn and almost shook hands with her," boasted Dumpy. "I give you my word I could see how red and healthy her cheeks were!"

Captain Kennard looked back over his shoulder and grinned.

"Major, I guess we'd better shoot Dumpy Scarth here after that thug Connors. Dumpy is the official crook-catcher of the air."

"I sure got that Simon guy when he tried to steal a ship and deliver it to Mexico," returned Dumpy.

"Oh, you're the man that pulled that stunt, eh?" said the major, as they came out on the sidewalk and walked toward the near-by church. "I heard about it. Broke his prop in the air, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir!" Dumpy swelled proudly. "I never thought it could be done, but I did it!"

Ever since he had been in the Air Service Dumpy had been trying to achieve country-wide fame as a flyer, and in the exploit of bringing down a ship stolen from Donovan Field he had nearly realized his ambition. The Government had supressed all public news of his exploit, however, and a surreptitious kind of fame was his only reward.

As the party entered the church where sandwiches and coffee were served to refugees and homeless ones Dumpy, his round face aglow, was happily explaining to the interested major the exact methods he had used. He would have been even happier had he known that before many hours he was to achieve his ambition in its full perfection—that newspapers and movies would feature him as "Lieutenant Robert Scarth, the man who—" In other words, Dumpy stood on the threshold of his private idea of paradise.

IT WAS 5:45 A.M., and the dawn was gray and chill. Dumpy leaned against the back of an overturned automobile, and lighted a cigaret. He was tired; he had been walking from guard to guard all night long. His sector ran up from the beach and included a portion of the completely washed-out section of town. He had walked through narrow lanes cleared through the clogged streets, climbed piles of splintered wood and articles that three days before had been offered for sale in the stores, and he had many scratches and

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bruises to show that his electric flashlight had not always been effective in showing him the way. To make matters more monotonous, nothing had happened. He had had no opportunity even to arrest anybody. He was mighty glad that it was time to collect his detail and go off duty.

5:55. He raised a whistle to his lips and blew a shrill, piercing blast. Almost immediately two other whistles could be heard faintly. The other flyers were collecting their men likewise.

One by one his guards appeared, the early arrivals leaning lifelessly against some handy resting-place to wait their comrades. The men from the more distant posts arrived at length, until five of the six in Scarth's detail had gathered. For five minutes they waited, but the other man did not show up.

"I wonder what the —— is keeping him," said Dumpy at length. "Who is it that's missing, anyway?"

"Drayton—he was on post 2, along the water-front," returned a young fellow who had been a clerk in a cigar-store before the storm.

"That's right near by, too. He ought to be here."

Dumpy raised his whistle again and sent a nerve-shattering blast through the misty air. Two or three of the guards raised a halloo, but there was no answer.

"Let's go down and see where he is," proposed Dumpy at length. "I saw him three-quarters of an hour ago. Probably the poor chap has fallen asleep. He looked like a death's head when I saw him, he was so tired."

The weary little company followed Dumpy toward the water-front. They were compelled to make many twists and turns, and once they had to climb the remains of a building to get to the beach. They finally surmounted the last line of wreckage and stood on the beach, which was wet beneath their feet. The water had receded somewhat the day before, leaving a few feet of unencumbered sand.

Dumpy whistled again, but there was no answer.

"He was sticking close to those two boats they fixed up yesterday," remarked the flyer. "We'll rove up there and see what we can see."

They rounded an outjutting point made by a transplanted dancing pavilion and came in sight of some rowboats, two of which had been repaired for use the day before. Through the thin, chill mist a motionless form could be seen beside the boats, prone on the wet beach.

"He must be sleepy to drop in the wet sand like that," said one of the guards. "I guess the poor chap——"

He broke off suddenly as they came closer and a low groan reached their ears. At a run, Dumpy in the lead, they came up to the stricken man. A red pool around his head and the bloody end of a shattered two-by-four told their own story.

"What happened, Drayton?" Dumpy asked as he leaned over the man, whose eyes were open.

"Connors—he stole one of the boats. He—he surprized me—and—knocked the gun out of my hand before—he—hit me," said Drayton faintly.

"Driggs, run up to town and commandeer the first car you see. We'll carry him to that first cleared street and meet you. A car couldn't get through here."

Driggs started at a stumbling run on his mission. Under Dumpy's direction they bound up the ugly wound on the guard's head with handkerchiefs. Before they started up to town with him Dumpy examined the boats—only one of them was serviceable. It was as Drayton had said—the escaped murderer had made off with one of the only two useful boats Corpus Christi had.

The little cavalcade was making its way slowly up from the beach when Dumpy stopped in his tracks with a bitter curse. For a moment he stood as if turned to stone, then he sprang into life.

"I'm going on ahead—you fellows tend to Drayton and then report to headquarters to be relieved," he said shortly.

Without another word he started running, his short fat legs covering the ground with surprizing speed.

Despite the chill of the morning he was in a wringing sweat when he reached the town hall. Hinkley with his detail was just going in and Captain Kennard was standing on the steps.

"Who's chasing you, me brave aviator?" inquired the surprized Hinkley as Dumpy rushed up the steps. "You look as if ——"

"Come here!" gasped Dumpy, and dragged his tall observer up to Captain Kennard, who was watching interestedly.

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"Captain, one of my guards has been half-killed by this fellow Connors, who stole one of those boats they fixed up yesterday. He has been gone a half-hour or so now. And the cottage Natalie is in is the first one Connors will sight that he can get to. Probably he needs food and water anyway, and it's sure as anything can be in the world that he will go up there. It's on a hill that stretches right down to the bay. He can't miss it. He'll land, go up there, and no telling what will happen!"

The stocky little captain swore feelingly.

"That's bad," he said slowly, his square face grim. "I——"

"Give Hink and me permission to get out to the field right away and take off. I'll keep an eye on the boat and if worse comes to worst I'll find some way to keep him away from the house. I think I can scare him just by flying around. I don't know, but we must do something, sir!"

"Go ahead, Dumpy, and luck be with you. Here, you!"

The captain roared the last words to the driver of a passing car. In a few words the situation was explained to him, and Hinkley and Scarth piled in. At a perilous rate of speed they bumped and swayed along the road to the field, sending the mud in flying lumps back of them. By great good luck they did not get stuck in mud-holes, for the young driver hit them with plenty of momentum.

The three—Hinkley, Scarth and the driver—were out of the flivver almost before it stopped, and ran toward the ships. They tore off the canvas motor and propeller-covers, and Dumpy climbed into the cockpit. He turned on the gas pet-cocks, pumped up the air-pressure, and gave the motor three stiff shots with the primer. Meanwhile Hinkley was turning over the propeller and got it set.

The lanky observer gave the young driver a few words of instruction, and then yelled—

"Contact!"

"Contact!" repeated Dumpy, and turned on one switch.

The driver set himself with one hand on the propeller and Hinkley took hold of the other one. With a mighty heave the two men pulled the propeller through, Hinkley jerking the young civilian out of the way while Dumpy, in the cockpit, jazzed the throttle. There was a sputter and Hinkley deigned to smile when the motor caught. It was almost miraculous luck that the cold Liberty should start at the first try.

The wheels were already blocked, so Dumpy closed the motor shutters, retarded the spark and advanced the throttle until the tachometer showed eight hundred revolutions a minute. The pilot watched the thermometer steadily. It would be madness to start with a cold motor, but it seemed an eternity before the instrument showed forty degrees, centigrade. Even that was low, but time was infinitely precious. Dumpy motioned to Hinkley and the observer flattened himself out on the tail. Slowly the throttle went forward until the great Liberty was running at 1400, hitting perfectly on all twelve cylinders. Each switch proved to be without a miss and the thermometer crawled up to sixty.

Slowly Dumpy throttled down to idling speed, and motioned Hinkley to come up to the front cockpit.

"You and this fellow here help me taxi out and turn around, will you? You can get in out there."

Hinkley nodded, leaped off the step, and quickly instructed their eager aid. Dumpy got his goggles out of the rear cockpit, belted himself in, and waited impatiently for Hinkley to crawl underneath the ship and take away the blocks. Then, with both men hanging on the right wing, he turned around, his left wing just scraping the fence. Hinkley ran around to the other wing, and at a rate that kept both wingmen at a half-run Dumpy taxied up the field. When he had turned again and the ship was pointed straight for the take-off Hinkley got in, put on helmet and goggles, and fastened his belt. With a wave to their helper Dumpy gave *Abigail* the gun.

THEY got into the air without trouble. Without circling the field at all the pilot sent his ship across Corpus Christi, scraping the tops of the buildings. The Liberty was open as far as she would go, and a hundred and twenty miles an hour showed on the air-speed meter as they sped out over the muddy bay. The ground mist was already lifting a trifle, and was so fleecy the airmen could see through it without difficulty.

It was less than five minutes before they spotted the lone boat. It was about two miles from the cottage where Natalie was.

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As the plane scraped the water a few yards from the boat the flyers grinned at the astonishment pictured on the ugly, scarred face of the boatman. He stopped rowing for almost a minute and then resumed his work. He was heading in toward the cottage, as Dumpy had foreseen. Probably he needed food badly right then.

For once in his life Dumpy was striving to think of some flying exploit in which no idea of personal glory entered. As the plane ceaselessly circled the slow-moving boat he racked his brain for some means to keep the criminal below from getting to the cottage. The thought of Natalie at the mercy of a man like Connors made the little pilot's blood run cold.

He remembered the first time he had met Ransom's bride, when her father, Colonel Brewster, had invited the Air Service men up and down the border to come to a dance at the Cavalry post in their honor. For over a year since that time Natalie Brewster had been the toast of the Air Service, and no social function, from Brownsville to El Paso, was complete without her. She had been like a sister to them all and although many of them had tried to win her, it had remained for young Ransom to come along and carry her off. But a hundred flyers, Dumpy among them, would have gone to any lengths to save her from far less than would probably face her when Connors landed at the bungalow.

Dumpy was a master flyer—the pilot in a hundred daredevil flying feats. But in all of them he had been playing to the gallery, striving for the notoriety that he hoped would accrue to him. Circling low over the bay in the chill morning air, Dumpy deliberately decided what he would do, totally without thought of self.

He looked over the land for a moment as Connors beached his boat. There was an open space fifty yards wide between the line of wreckage and the house, with lines of trees bounding it on each side, running down nearly to the edges of the bay. As Connors struggled through the tangled mess of lumber, wrecked boats and animal carcasses Dumpy turned and looked at Hinkley, his sardonic, jeering, steel-nerved partner in all the vicissitudes of a year of border-patrol flying. By motioning with his hands Dumpy conveyed to Hinkley what he meant to do. The observer nodded. Both men knew that only a miracle would bring them out without a bad crash—that Fortune would have to smile if they emerged with only injuries.

Dumpy watched Connors' big form emerge from the wreckage and start across the lawn. The De Haviland was a hundred feet high, and as far to one side of the house. Dumpy circled and straightened out with his ship pointed across the clearing, parallel to the beach-line. He opened the throttle wide and nosed down. Connors was nearly half-way to the house.

Wires screaming, struts quivering, speed-meter needle wobbling crazily at a hundred and seventy miles an hour, Dumpy skimmed the trees and leveled out two feet above the ground, headed straight for Connors. The man saw what was going to happen to him too late, if he realized it at all. Dumpy did not waver. The DeHaviland hardly felt the shock as it hit Connors and threw his mangled, lifeless body aside. But the propeller, splintered and useless, meant that the worst had happened.

Dumpy's hand was on the switches and he cut the racing engine like a flash. He pulled back on the stick and their momentum carried them up for a moment. There was just speed enough left to lift the ship over the line of trees. It wavered for an instant and then plunged the thirty feet to the ground, a shapeless mass.

HINKLEY was up and around the house when boats were available two days later to bring in castaways, but the Air Service had completed its duty at Corpus Christi and had been home two weeks before Dumpy could hobble about.

Lieutenant David Ransom and Mrs. Ransom gave a week-end party at the bungalow when Dumpy was able to walk on crutches and the airmen who had been on the storm patrol were the guests. Hinkley, smiling his careless, mocking smile, carried a huge bundle of newspapers. Dumpy, bandaged and comparatively thin, seized them eagerly. His face lighted up with a beatific smile when he opened the San Antonio *Express*, dated three weeks back. The head-line was there, and in the sub-head Robert Scarth was very prominent.

Tex MacDowell, in the group which surrounded Dumpy as he lay on the sofa, grinned at Captain Kennard.

"Dumpy has recovered," he drawled.

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MARACAYBO

A TALE of the BRETHREN of the MAIN

by Rafael Sabatini

Author of "Rebels Convict," "Don Diego Valdez," etc.

THE altercation was at its height when Captain Peter Blood lounged out of the Church of Nuestra Señora del Carmen at Maracaybo, which he had impiously appropriated for the purposes of a *corps-de-garde*, and joined the contentious group.

This consisted, on the one side, of his one-eyed lieutenant Wolverstone, young Jerry Pitt, quartermaster of the *Colleen*, and Hagthorpe, who was in command of the *Elizabeth*. Opposed to these stood Cahusac, the Breton buccaneer who had joined them with his ship *La Foudre* and his contingent of some sixscore French adventurers.

Below, in the wide, sunlit, dusty square, sparsely fringed with tall palms whose fronds drooped listlessly in the quivering heat, surged a couple of hundred wild fellows belonging to both parties, their own excitement momentarily quelled that they might listen to the altercation among their leaders.

In this Cahusac appeared to be having it all his own way, and his harsh, querulous voice was raised that all might hear his truculent denunciation. In appearance he was a short, sturdy, powerfully built man, bow-legged and as long in the arms as an ape, while his dress was of a quality to advertise his trade and ludicrously in contrast with the sober garb of Wolverstone and the almost foppish daintiness of Jerry Pitt.

His soiled and blood-stained blue cotton shirt was open in front to cool his hairy chest, and the girdle about the waist of his leather breeches carried an arsenal of pistols and a knife, while a cutlas hung from a leather baldric loosely slung about his body; above his countenance, broad and flat as a Mongolian's, a red scarf was swathed, turbanwise, about his head.

"I warned you all from the first," he was furiously complaining, "that things were too easy. It was enough for me to find the fort abandoned and our entrance practically undisputed; then this similarly abandoned city, out of which the inhabitants had removed themselves and everything of value. I guessed then that it was intended to lure us on and detain us here until it should be too late to get out to sea again.

"But you, you would not listen to me; you, you would go on. Well, we went on—to Gibraltar. True that in the end we caught the deputy-governor; true that we compelled him handsomely to ransom that city, and that between ransom and plunder we have taken upwards of two hundred thousand pieces of eight.

"But what is it in reality? Just a piece of cheese in a mouse-trap; and we are the mice; we are in the trap and the cats are waiting for us in the shape of those four Spanish men-of-war lurking outside the bottle-neck of this cursed lagoon. *Sang-dieu!* That is the situation into which your obstinacy has brought us."

The single eye of the gigantic Wolverstone rolled terribly.

"May I be flayed—" he was beginning when Peter Blood, sauntering forward, thrust himself between the two.

Leaning lightly upon his long ebony cane, his lean, swarthy face with its singularly light eyes shaded by a broad plumed hat, he had the air of a lounger in the Mall or the Alameda—the latter rather, since his

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elegant suit of violet taffetas with gold-embroidered buttonholes was in the Spanish fashion.

But the long, stout, serviceable rapier, thrust up behind by the left hand that rested lightly on the pommel, corrected the impression. That and those steely light eyes of his announced the adventurer.

"There's something that ye're leaving out of the account, Cahusac," said he, more in weariness than anger. "Success depended, as we all know, upon speed. We've been a month in doing what should have been done—and what but for your own blundering would have been done—inside of a week."

"Ah, *nom de Dieu!* Was it my fault perhaps that——"

"Whose fault was it that you ran your ship aground on the shoal in the middle of the lake? You knew your way better than any pilot; and as a consequence we wasted three precious days in getting canoes to bring off your men and your gear. Those three days gave the folk at Gibraltar not only time to hear of our coming but time in which to get away. After that, and because of it, we had to follow the deputy-governor to his island fortress, and a fortnight and best part of a hundred lives were lost in reducing it.

"That's how we come to have delayed until this Spanish fleet gets round from Caracas to block our way out; and if ye hadn't lost *La Foudre* and so reduced our fleet from three ships to two, we should even now be in case to fight our way through with a reasonable hope of succeeding. Yet you think it is for you to come hectoring it here, upbraiding us for a situation that is entirely the result of your own ineptitude."

HE TURNED from Cahusac to address the mob of buccaneers who had surged nearer to hear him, for he had not troubled to raise his voice.

"I hope that will help to correct some of the misapprehension that appears to have been disturbing you," said he.

"It's no use dealing with what's past and done," cried Cahusac, more sullen now than truculent—whereupon Wolverstone laughed a laugh that was like the neighing of a horse. "The question is, what are we to do now?"

"Sure, now, there's no question at all," said Captain Blood.

"Indeed, but there is," Cahusac insisted. "Don Miguel de Espinosa offers us safe and unmolested passage to sea if we will depart at once without damage to the town, releasing our prisoners and surrendering the plunder taken at Gibraltar."

"Which argues," said Hagthorpe, "that even at a disadvantage at which he has us, the Spanish admiral is still afraid of us."

"Or else that he is unaware of the true extent of our weakness," was the fierce retort. "And anyway it's my opinion that we should accept these terms."

"Well, it's not mine, now," said Captain Blood. "So I've refused them."

"Refused!"

Cahusac's broad face grew purple. A muttering from the men behind enheartened him.

"Refused? Will you tell me precisely what answer you have returned the admiral?"

"I have sent him word that unless within four and twenty hours we have his parole to stand out to sea without hindering our passage and a ransom of fifty-thousand pieces for Maracaybo, we will reduce this beautiful city to ashes and thereafter go out and destroy his fleet."

The impudence of it left Cahusac speechless. But among the English buccaneers in the square there was some laughter and acclamation, showing that they savored the audacious humor of the trapped dictating terms to the trapper. Soon even Cahusac's French followers were infected by it, until in his truculent obstinacy Cahusac remained the only dissentient.

He withdrew in mortification. But he had his revenge of the morrow when Don Miguel's messenger brought back a letter in which the Spanish admiral took Heaven to witness that since the pirates had refused his magnanimous offer to accept their surrender with the honors of war, he should now await them at the mouth of the lake, there to destroy them on their coming forth.

He added that should they delay departure he would, as soon as he was reenforced by a fifth ship which he was expecting from Caracas, himself come inside to seek them at Maracaybo.

Captain Blood was out of temper.

"Trouble me no more!" he snapped at Cahusac, who came growling to him again. "Send word to Don Miguel that you have seceded from me. He'll give you safe conduct, devil a doubt. Then take your men

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aboard one of the sloops and put to sea, and —— go with you."

Cahusac would certainly have pursued that course if only his men had been unanimous in the matter. They, however, were torn between greed and apprehension. If they went they must leave behind their share of the plunder, which was considerable, as well as the slaves and other prisoners they had taken. If they did this, and Captain Blood should afterward get away —and from their knowledge of his resourcefulness they accounted the thing, though unlikely, not impossible—he would profit by that which they now relinquished.

This was a possibility too bitter to be contemplated. And so, in the end, their surrender was not to Don Miguel but to Captain Blood. They had come into the venture with him and they would go out of it with him or not at all. Such was the message he received from them that evening by the mouth of Cahusac himself.

HE WELCOMED it, and he invited the Breton to sit down and join the council which was even then deliberating with him upon the means to be employed. They occupied the spacious patio of the governor's house—which Captain Blood had appropriated to his own uses—a cloistered stone quadrangle in the middle of which a fountain played coolly under a trellis of vines.

Orange trees grew on two sides of it, and the still evening air was heavy with the scent of them. It was one of those pleasant exterior-interiors which Moorish architects had introduced to Spain and the Spaniards had carried with them to the New World.

There that council of war, composed of six in all, deliberated until late upon the plan of action which Captain Blood put forward.

The great fresh-water lake of Maracaybo, nourished by a score of rivers from the snow-capped ranges that flank it on two sides, is some hundred and twenty miles in length and almost the same distance across at its widest. It is in the shape of a great bottle, having its neck toward the sea at Maracaybo. Beyond this neck the waters widen again, and then two long narrow strips of land, known as the Islands of Palomas and Vigilias, squarely block the channel, forming a natural breakwater.

The only passage out to sea for vessels of any draft lies in the narrow strait between these islands. Palomas is some ten miles in length and unapproachable for half a mile on either side by any but the shallowest craft, save toward its eastern end where, completely commanding the narrow passage out to sea, stands the massive fort which the buccaneers had found deserted on their coming.

Well within that natural breakwater the four Spanish ships rode at anchor in mid-channel. The admiral's *La Concepcion* was a mighty galleon of forty-eight great guns and eight small; next in importance was the *Salvador* with thirty-six guns; the other two, the *Infanta* and the *San Felipe*, though smaller vessels, were still formidable enough with their twenty guns and a hundred and fifty men apiece.

Such was the place and such the fleet of which the gantlet was to be run by Captain Blood and his own *Colleen* of forty guns, the *Elizabeth* of twenty-six and two sloops captured at Gibraltar, which they had indifferently armed with four culverins each. In men they had a bare four hundred survivors of the five hundred and odd that had left Tortuga, to oppose to some thousand Spaniards.

THE plan submitted by Captain Blood to his council was a desperate one, as Cahusac uncompromisingly pronounced it.

"Why, so it is," the captain agreed. "But I've done things more desperate."

Complacently he pulled at a pipe that was loaded with that fragrant Sacerdotes' tobacco for which Gibraltar was famous and of which they had brought away some hogsheads.

"And, what's more, they've succeeded."

He breathed into his companions, and even into Cahusac, some of his own spirit of unconquerable confidence, and in that confidence all went busily to work. For three days from sunrise to sunset the buccaneers labored and sweated over the preparations for the action that was to procure them their deliverance.

Their main operations were on the larger of the two sloops captured at Gibraltar. They began by tearing down all bulkheads until they had reduced her to the merest shell, and in her sides they broke open so many ports that her gunwale was converted into the semblance of a grating. Next they

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increased by a half-dozen the scuttles in her deck, and finally they packed her hull with tar and pitch and brimstone, to which they added six barrels of gunpowder, placed like guns at the open ports on her starboard side.

On the evening of the fourth day, everything being now in readiness, all were got aboard. But they did not weigh anchor until some two hours after midnight. Then at last on the first of the ebb they drifted silently down toward the bar with all canvas furled, save only their spritsails, which, so as to give them steeringway, were spread to the faint breeze that stirred through the purple darkness of the tropical night.

The order of their going was as follows: Ahead went their improvised fire-ship in charge of Wolverstone with a crew of six volunteers, each of whom was to have a hundred pieces of eight over and above his share of plunder as a special reward. Next came the powerful *Colleen*. She was followed at a distance by the *Elizabeth*, commanded by Hagthorpe, with whom was the now shipless Cahusac and the bulk of his French followers. The rear was brought up by the second sloop and some eight canoes, aboard which the prisoners and slaves had been shipped and most of the captured merchandise.

As the first glimmerings of opalescent dawn dissolved the darkness the straining eyes of the buccaneers were able to make out the tall rigging of the Spanish vessels at their anchorage less than a quarter of a mile ahead. Entirely without suspicion as the Spaniards were and confident of their own overwhelming strength, it is unlikely that they used a vigilance keener than their careless habit.

Certain it is that they did not sight Blood's fleet in that dim light until some time after Blood's fleet had sighted them. By the time that the Spaniards were roused to activity Wolverstone's sloop was almost upon them, speeding under canvas which had been crowded to her yards the moment the galleons had loomed into view.

Straight for the admiral's great ship, the *Concepcion*, did Wolverstone head the sloop; then, lashing down the helm, he kindled a great torch of plaited straw that had been steeped in bitumen. First it glowed, then as he swung it round his head it blossomed into flame, just as the slight vessel went crashing and bumping and scraping against the side of the *Concepcion* and rigging became entangled with rigging, to the straining of yards and snapping of spars overhead.

His six men stood at their posts to starboard, each of them armed with a grapnel, four on the gunwale, two aloft. At the moment of impact the grapnels were slung to bind the Spaniard to them, those aloft to complete and preserve the entanglement of rigging.

Aboard the rudely awakened galleon all was scurry, confusion, trumpetings and shoutings. At first they had made a desperately hurried attempt to get up the anchor; but this they abandoned upon conceiving themselves on the point of being boarded.

The Spaniards stood to arms to receive the onslaught, and its slowness in coming began to intrigue them, considering what were the usual tactics of the buccaneers. Further puzzled were they by the spectacle of the gigantic Wolverstone speeding naked along his deck with a flaming torch held high. Not until he had completed his work did they begin to suspect the truth—that he was lighting slow-matches, and then one of the *Concepcion's* officers, rendered reckless by panic, ordered a boarding-party on to the sloop. But the order came too late.

Wolverstone had seen his six fellows drop overboard, and then had sped himself to the larboard gunwale. Thence he flung his blazing torch down the nearest gaping scuttle and dived overboard in his turn, to be picked up presently by the long-boat from the *Colleen*. But before that happened, the sloop was a thing of fire, from which explosions were hurling blazing combustibles aboard the Spanish flagship and long tongues of flame were licking out to consume the galleon, beating back those daring Spaniards who, too late, strove desperately to cut her adrift.

And while the most formidable vessel of the Spanish fleet was thus being put out of action at the outset, Blood had sailed in to open fire upon the *Salvador*. First athwart her hawse he had loosed a broadside that had swept her decks with terrific carnage, then, going on and about, he had put a second broadside into her hull at short range. Leaving her thus half-crippled, temporarily at least, and keeping to his course, he had bewildered the crew of the *Infanta* by a couple of shots from the chasers on his beak head, then crashed alongside to grapple and board her, while Hagthorpe was doing the

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like by the *San Felipe* after subjecting her to a punishing fire.

And in all this time not a single shot had the Spaniards contrived to fire, so completely had they been taken by surprize and so swift and paralyzing had been Blood's stroke.

Boarded now and faced by the cold steel of the buccaneers, neither the *Infanta* nor the *San Felipe* offered much resistance. The sight of their admiral in flames and the *Salvador* drifting crippled from the action so utterly disheartened them that they accounted themselves vanquished and laid down their arms.

The *Salvador* might yet have attempted to retrieve the fortunes of the day and by a resolute stand encouraged the other two undamaged vessels to a resistance that might have turned the scales. But it happened that the *Salvador* was handicapped in true Spanish fashion by being the treasure-ship of the fleet.

Intent above all upon saving her precious freight from falling into the hands of the pirates, Don Miguel, who with a remnant of his crew had meanwhile transferred himself aboard her from his burning vessel, headed her down toward Palomas and the fort that guarded the passage.

This fort the admiral in those days of waiting had taken the precaution secretly to garrison and rearm. For the purpose he had stripped the fort of Cojero, farther out on the gulf, of its entire armament, which if not very considerable in the number of guns at least included a battery of cannon-royal of more than ordinary range and power.

With no suspicion of this, Captain Blood gave chase, accompanied by the *Infanta*, which was manned now by a prize crew under the command of Wolverstone. The stern-chasers of the *Salvador* desultorily returned the fire of her pursuers. But such was the damage she herself sustained that presently, coming under the guns of the fort, she began to sink and finally settled down in the shallows with part of her hull above water. Thence, some in boats and some by swimming, the admiral got his crew ashore on Palomas as best he could.

And then, just as Blood accounted the victory won and that his way out to sea lay clear, the fort suddenly revealed its unsuspected strength. With a roar the cannons-royal proclaimed themselves, and the *Colleen* staggered under a double blow. A sixty-pound shot had breached her bulwarks at the waist, scattering death and confusion among the seamen gathered there, while another had smashed her mizzen just above the yard and sent it crashing forward into the main shrouds, so that for the moment she was hardly in case either to fight or run.

Pitt, her quartermaster, himself seized the helm and put it hard over. In her partially crippled state she answered slowly. Fortunately she was almost out of range of the fort's lesser batteries, and by the time the cannons-royal had reloaded she presented only her stern to the Spanish gunners.

MEANWHILE it had fared even worse with the frailer *Infanta*. Although hit by one shot only, this had crushed her larboard timbers on the water-line, starting a leak that must presently have filled her but for Wolverstone's prompt action in ordering her larboard guns to be flung overboard. Thus lightened and listing now to starboard, he fetched her about and went staggering after the retreating *Colleen*, followed by the fire of the fort, which did them, however, no further damage.

Out of range at last they lay to, joined by the *Elizabeth* and the *San Felipe*, to consider their position. It was a bitter moment for Captain Blood. He was compelled to digest the fact that having destroyed a force so superior in ships and guns and men that the Spanish admiral had justifiably deemed it overwhelming, their victory was rendered barren by three lucky shots from an unsuspected battery by which they had been surprized. And barren must their victory continue until they could reduce the fort that still remained to defend the passage.

The *Colleen* no longer now in case to put to sea, the *Infanta* merely kept afloat by artifice, and the *San Felipe* sorely damaged by the fire she had sustained from the buccaneers before surrendering, it was clear that nothing remained but to return to Maracaybo, there to refit before attempting to force the passage.

Almost it needed the spur of Cahusac's pessimism to revive Captain Blood's drooping spirits. And the arguments he used to the Frenchman were similar to those which he addressed next day to Don Miguel in a truculent letter that was couched, however, in purest and very scholarly Castilian.

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I showed your Excellency yesterday (he wrote) of what I am capable. I have sunk or captured the vessels of the proud fleet with which you were coming to Maracaybo to destroy us. So that you can no longer boast of doing this even when your reenforcements reach you from Caracas on the *Santo Niño*. From what has occurred you may judge what will occur. I should not trouble your Excellency with this letter but that I am a humane man, abhorring bloodshed.

Therefore before proceeding to deal with your fort, which you may deem invincible, as I have already dealt with your fleet, which you deemed invincible, I make you purely out of humanitarian considerations this last offer of terms.

I will spare this city of Maracaybo, leaving behind me the forty prisoners I have taken, in consideration of your paying me the sum of fifty thousand pieces of eight and a hundred head of cattle as a ransom, thereafter granting me unmolested passage out to sea. My prisoners, who are mostly persons of consideration and include a deputy-governor and a bishop, I will retain as hostages for this until after my departure, sending them back in the boats which we shall take with us for that purpose.

If your Excellency should be so ill-advised as to refuse these terms, I warn you that I shall give no quarter. I shall begin by leaving a heap of ashes where this pleasant city of Maracaybo now stands, and as soon as my ships are refitted I shall come out and do the like by your fort.

That letter he dispatched by the hand of the deputy-governor of Maracaybo, who had been taken prisoner at Gibraltar. It was a shrewd choice of messenger. The deputy-governor was of all men the most anxious for the preservation of his city, the one man who on his own account would plead most fervently for this at all costs.

And as Captain Blood reckoned so it befell. The deputy-governor added his own passionate pleas to the proposals of the letter. But Don Miguel was of harder mettle. True, his fleet had been partly destroyed and partly captured. But that was due to the accident of his having been taken by surprize.

It was something that could not happen again. There should be no surprizing the fort. He invited the deputy-governor to observe that he was increasing its strength and augmenting its armament by the thirty-six guns of the *Salvador*, which his men, working at low tide, were salving from the stranded galleon.

Let Captain Blood do his worst at Maracaybo, there should be a bitter reckoning for him when he decided—as sooner or later decide he must—to come forth.

Back to Maracaybo came the deputy-governor with the admiral's answer. And infected by the admiral's stout courage, he delivered it as truculently as Don Miguel could have desired.

"And is it like that?" said Captain Blood.

He smiled, though the heart of him had sunk like a stone through water when he heard how the fort was increasing its strength.

"Well, well! It's a pity now that the admiral's so headstrong. That is how he lost his fleet. And that's how ye'll lose your city. It's mighty sorry I am, for I detest waste. But what can I do? I'll have the fagots to the place in the morning, and perhaps when Don Miguel sees the blaze he'll begin to believe that Peter Blood is a man of his word. Ye may go, Don Francisco."

THE deputy-governor went out with dragging feet, followed by guards, his spark of truculence extinguished by dismay.

But no sooner had he departed than up leaped Cahusac, who had been of the council assembled to receive the admiral's reply. His face was white.

"Death of my life! What have you to say now?" And he raved on: "I knew the admiral would never yield to your bluster. He holds us pinned, and he knows it. The delay in refitting destroys your last hope and that impudent letter of yours has sealed the doom of every man of us."

"Have ye done?" quoth Blood quietly.

"No, I have not."

"No matter. Ye may spare us the rest. It won't move us and it won't help us to solve the riddle that's before us."

"What are you going to do? Will you tell me that?"

It was not a question; it was a demand.

"Ah, now, don't let it concern you," said Blood smoothly. "After all, your room'll be pleasanter than your company, Cahusac. You and those that think with you are welcome to leave us. I've no doubt at all that the Spanish admiral will welcome a reduction in our force even at this late hour. Ye shall have the sloop as a parting gift, and ye can join Don Miguel in the fort for all I care."

White-faced and quivering with anger, Cahusac glowered at him for a moment. At last—

"It shall be as my men decide," said he, and on that stalked out, leaving the others to deliberate in peace.

Betimes next morning he sought Captain

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Blood again. He found him alone in the patio, pacing to and fro, his head sunk on his breast. Cahusac mistook consideration for dejection. Each of us carries in himself the standard by which to measure his neighbor.

"We have taken you at your word, captain," he announced between sullenness and defiance.

Shoulders hunched, hands behind his back, Captain Blood paused and regarded the buccaneer with mildly questioning eyes.

"Last night I sent one of my men to the Spanish admiral with a letter offering to capitulate if he would grant us passage with the honors of war. This morning I have his answer. He accords us this on the understanding that we carry nothing away. My men are embarking on the sloop. We sail at once."

"*Bon voyage!*" said Captain Blood, and he turned on his heel to resume his interrupted meditation.

"Is that all you have to say to me?"cried Cahusac.

"I desire to spare your feelings," said Captain Blood over his shoulder.

"Ha! Then it's *adieu*, my captain." Venomously he added, "It's my belief that we shall not meet again."

"Your belief is my hope," said Captain Blood.

Cahusac flung away, obscenely vituperative. Before noon he was under weigh with sixty dejected followers whom he had persuaded into this empty-handed departure. The admiral kept faith and allowed them to depart unmolested, which, from his knowledge of Spanish ways, was almost more than Captain Blood expected.

Meanwhile no sooner had the deserters weighed anchor than the deputy-governor begged to see Captain Blood again. The captain received him pleasantly.

"Good morning to you, Don Francisco. I have postponed the bonfire until nightfall. It will make a better show in the dark."

Don Francisco, a slight, nervous elderly man of high lineage and low vitality, came straight to business. He confessed that a night's reflection had quickened his apprehensions for his beautiful city and his condemnation of the admiral's irreconcilability.

"I am here to tell you, Don Pedro, that if you will hold your hand for three days I will undertake to raise the ransom you demand, which Don Miguel refuses."

"And where will you be raising it?" Captain Blood frowned his surprize.

"That must remain my affair. Give me leave for three days on parole, and I will see you fully satisfied. Meanwhile my son remains in your hands as a hostage for my return."

"By the saints! Ye're a bold man, Don Francisco, to come to me with such a tale—to tell me that ye can raise the ransom and yet refuse to say how. D'ye think that with a match between your fingers ye'd grow more communicative now?"

If Don Francisco turned a shade paler, yet he shook his head.

"That was the way of Morgan and L'Ollonais. But it is not the way of Captain Blood. You have the repute of making war like a gentleman."

"So I have," said Captain Blood. "I find it more profitable. That's why ye're accorded the three days. You shall have what mules you need. About it, Don Francisco."

Away went Don Francisco, to return punctually on the third day, his mules laden with plate and coin to the value demanded and a herd of a hundred head of cattle driven in by negro slaves.

The cattle were handed over to those of the company who normally were boucan-hunters and skilled in the curing of meat, and for best part of a week thereafter they were busy at the waterside with the salting of carcasses.

And while this was proceeding on the one hand, on the other the refitting and repairing of the ships went on apace. Indian spies employed by Blood confirmed the deputy-governor's statement that the Spaniards had salved the thirty-six guns from the stranded *Salvador* and thus made a really formidable addition to their strength.

The fact that all the artillery was emplaced upon the seaward side of the fort so as to command the channel inspired in Blood the notion to land secretly on Palomas and attempt to take the fort by storm, by a surprize attack upon its rear before the guns could be shifted to meet it. If he abandoned that plan it was not so much because of the difficulties it presented as because a stratagem—arising out of it—promised more certain and complete success.

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UPON this, all being now in readiness, he decided to act. So confident was he of success that he released at once all his prisoners with the exception of the slaves, whom he regarded as legitimate prizes. Then all being aboard, the treasure safely stowed in the holds and the slaves under hatches, they weighed anchor and stood out for the bar, each vessel towing three periaguas astern.

The admiral, beholding their advance in the full light of noon, rubbed his hands in satisfaction and laughed through his teeth.

"At last, *por Dios!*" he cried. "Here end the troubles caused to the subjects of the Catholic king by this infamous pirate."

He issued orders briskly. The guns were manned, the gunners already kindling fuses, when it was observed that the buccaneer fleet, while still approaching Palomas, was at the same time bearing away to westward. At last the four ships cast anchor within a half-mile of the island—that is to say, on the very edge of the shoal water that makes Palomas unapproachable on either side except by vessels of the shallowest draft—opposite a point a mile and a half behind the fort. There they rode, within view but just out of range of the Spaniards.

Watching them through his telescope, the puzzled admiral observed the canoes they were towing to go alongside and remain hidden for a little while behind the hulls. When at last they reappeared, rowing away from the fleet, each boat was crowded with armed men. Thus laden, they headed for the shore, which was densely wooded to the water's edge.

The admiral's eye followed them until they were screened by the foliage. Soon the canoes came forth again, empty now save for the men who rowed them. Back to the ships they pulled, to return once more with a fresh load of men, which similarly they conveyed ashore.

"They are landing to attack us in the rear!" cried an officer.

"I had perceived it," said the admiral. He laughed, unintimidated. "Let them attack where they please. It is themselves will be destroyed."

But toward evening, when the canoes had made a half-dozen journeys with their armed loads and had been seen to convey also at least a dozen guns ashore, the admiral's equanimity abandoned him.

"What fool told me they number but three hundred? They've put at least twice that number ashore already."

He was not to guess that the men he beheld in the boats were always the same; that they went from ship to shore standing upright in full view and that they returned to the ships lying invisible below the gunwales of the craft. Nor was he to guess that when night fell, in spite of all those ostentatious landing-operations there was not a single buccaneer ashore.

By now he was sharing his followers' lively fears of this impending night attack by land, delivered by a force at least twice as strong as they had suspected the pestilent Blood to command. In the last hours of daylight the Spaniards did precisely what Captain Blood so confidently counted that they must do. They set themselves to labor like the damned at their ponderous guns which commanded the passage out to sea. Groaning and sweating, they toiled in panic-stricken haste to shift the greater number and more powerful of these guns to the landward side, and there to emplace them anew, so that they might be prepared to receive the attack that at any moment now might burst upon them from the woods not half a mile away.

Night closed in, dark and moonless, and the Spaniards waited in mortal anxiety for the onslaught of those wild devils whose fury and reckless courage in attack was a byword on the seas of the Main. And while they so alertly waited on the landward side, Blood's ships, with never a light showing, had left their anchorage and were groping their way by soundings toward the channel that led to the passage out to sea.

The *Elizabeth* and the *Infanta*, side by side, were abreast of the fort before their shadowy bulks and the soft gurgle of water at their prows were detected. A shout of alarm rang out, followed instantly by such a roar of human fury as may have resounded about Babel at the confusion of tongues. To increase the Spanish distraction, the detected *Elizabeth* emptied her larboard guns into the fort as she was hurried past on the swiftly ebbing tide.

Realizing—though not yet how—he had been duped and that his prey was in the act of escaping after all, the admiral frantically commanded that the guns that had been moved be dragged back to their former emplacements, and he ordered his gunners to

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the depleted batteries that of all his powerful but now unavailing armament still remained trained upon the channel.

From these, after the loss of some precious moments, the fort at last wildly made fire. The obsession that an attack might still at any moment break upon their rear served to increase the general confusion.

That cannonade was answered by a terrific broadside from the *Colleen*, which had now drawn abreast and was crowding canvas to her yards. The enraged and gibbering Spaniards had a brief vision of her as the line of flame leaped from her red flank. After that they saw her no more.

Assimilated by the friendly darkness which the Spanish guns were speculatively stabbing, the escaping ships fired never another shot that might assist their baffled and bewildered enemies to locate them. Some slight damage they sustained, but by the time the Spaniards had resolved their confusion into some order of dangerous offense, Blood's fleet, well served by a southerly breeze, was through the narrows and standing out to sea.

AND that is how Don Miguel de Espinosa was left to chew the bitter cud of a lost opportunity and to consider in what terms he would acquaint the supreme council of the Catholic king that Peter Blood had got away from Maracaybo with two hundred and fifty thousand pieces of eight, to say nothing of slaves and lesser merchandise and two twenty-gun frigates that were lately the property of Spain.

Nor was that the end of the losses suffered on this occasion by the Catholic king. For on the following evening off the coast of Oruba Captain Blood's fleet met the belated *Santo Niño*, speeding under full sail to reenforce the admiral at Maracaybo.

At first the Spaniard conceived that she was meeting the victorious fleet of Don Miguel returning from the destruction of the pirates. When at comparatively close quarters the Cross of St. George went up to disillusion her, she chose the better part of valor and struck her flag. Captain Blood ordered her crew to take to the boats and land themselves at Oruba or wherever else they pleased.

Then he went aboard the *Santo Niño* to investigate this further prize. When her hatches were taken off a human cargo was disclosed within her hold.

"Slaves," said Wolverstone, and persisted in that belief until Cahusac crawled up out of the dark bowels of the ship and stood blinking in the sunlight. There was more than sunlight to make the Breton pirate blink; and those that crawled out after him—the remnants of his crew—cursed him horribly for the pusillanimity which had brought them the ignominy of being delivered by those whom they had deserted as lost beyond hope.

Their sloop had encountered and had been sunk by the *Santo Niño* three days ago, and Cahusac had—as the events were to prove—narrowly escaped hanging merely that in future he might be a mock among the Brethren of the Main.

For many a day thereafter the jeering question asked him in Tortuga was—

"Where do you spend the gold that you brought back from Maracaybo?"

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The SHOWDOWN

by Frederick R. Bechdolt

Author of "John Slaughter's Way," "Cochise," etc.

NOTE:—As you know, we seldom break our habit of printing fiction stories only. You prefer fiction on the whole, and in our magazine's field it is particularly difficult to ensure an article's being absolutely true to fact. Occasionally we have ventured an exception, without at all abandoning the rule. We do so in the case of this series of articles on prominent figures in the development of the West, believing that the author's standing is sufficient guarantee of trueness to essential fact and that your long displayed interest in our country's early history is sufficient warrant.—A. S. H.

IN THE early days of Tombstone when miners and merchants and cowmen and faro-dealers and outlaws were drifting into Cochise County from all over the West, a young fellow by the name of William C. Breckenbridge came down from Colorado to the new camp. He was, so the old-timers say, one of those smallish men who can wear a flannel shirt and broad-brimmed hat so jauntily that, although their breeches be tucked into their boot-tops, they still look marvelously neat; but while he could come through a hard day's ride still suggesting a bandbox, there was nothing of the dandy about him.

His people had staked him to go out West and at their suggestion he had hunted up an older brother in Colorado. But two years in the wide reaches of the Platte country, where the monotony of teaming was varied by occasional brushes with the Indians, failed to satisfy his spirit. And so he came riding down into the flaring valleys of the Southwestern border along with the first influx of adventurers.

He was still in his early twenties and the world looked good to him; one of those quiet youths who preface most remarks with a smile because, all other things being equal, they like their fellow men.

He knocked about the camp, trying this thing and that, and was starting in at mining engineering with an old marine compass as his only instrument when Johnny Behan, who was newly appointed sheriff by the Governor, gave him a job as a deputy. Then straight away the eyes of the men were turned upon him, and the query arose— . .

"How's he going to stack up when it comes to a showdown?"

Those were the days, you understand, when—to indulge in a Scriptural figure—he who took up the sword must be prepared to perish by the sword. If you buckled on a gun you must be ready to draw it and once you started to draw it, Heaven help you if you did not reckon on going through with the play.

A man could get by, as the saying has it, if he played the part of a neutral; but if, on the one hand, you started in at stealing cattle or if, on the other hand, you pinned on a star—why then, sooner or later the big issue was going to come to a head; you were going to find yourself faced by a foe or foes, armed like yourself and, like yourself, prepared to shoot it out. Then when the showdown came you would

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comport yourself according to the stuff that you were made of—the material which was hidden away deep down under your skin—and according to your conduct the world would judge you.

So naturally enough in those days men asked this question and waited for events to bring its answer. And those among them who were not gifted with the faculty of reading character but needed to see a man for themselves when the guns were blazing, those individuals had to wait a long time.

As for the others, what they said to themselves as one adventure followed another now in the career of Billy Breckenbridge, you who read these words can judge—if you be blessed with ordinary perspicacity. For many things took place and many months went by before young Breckenbridge reached down along his lean right thigh toward the butt of his forty-five single-action revolver.

IT IS quite likely that Johnny Behan was among those who wanted the new deputy to give a demonstration of the stuff he was made of. Perhaps that was the reason the sheriff sent young Breckenbridge over into the eastern end of the county to collect the taxes before the latter had worn his star long enough to get used to it.

In those days the sheriff's office levied assessments and did the collecting on personal property at the same time. Payments were made in cash; bank-checks were practically unknown in Cochise County. And thus far the country east of the Dragoon Mountains had yielded no revenues for the simple reason that it looked as if nothing short of a troop of cavalry could go forth into that region and return again with the money.

Beyond those rocky peaks which frowned across the mesquite flat at Tombstone lay other ragged mountain-ranges; the Chiracahuas, the Dos Cabezas, the Swisshelms and the Grahams. Between their towering walls the valleys of the Sulphur Springs and the San Simon stretched away and away southward across the Mexican border, great tawny plains pulsating under the hot sun.

Upon their level floors the heat-devils danced all the long days like armies of fantom dervishes gone mad with their interminable leapings and whirlings. And strange grotesque mirages climbed up into the glaring heavens. A savage land wherein savage men rode, as packs of gray wolves range in the Winter time when meat is scarce, searching the distant sky-line for some sign of life on which to prey.

For this was No Man's Land. Bands of renegade Apaches lurked among its empurpled peaks. Companies of Mexican smugglers came northward through its steep-walled border cañons driving their laden burros to lonely rendezvous where hard-eyed traders awaited them with pack-mules loaded down with 'dobe dollars. A few lonely ranch-houses where there was water in the lowlands; in the mountains a sawmill or two and some far-flung mines; here the habitations were like arsenals. Honest men must go armed to work and sleep with arms by their bedsides, and even then it was advisable for them to ask no questions of those who rode up to their cabins.

And it was best for them to make no protests at what such guests did unto their own or the property of others. For since the days when the first semblances of law had come to Tombstone this region had been the sanctuary of the bad-men.

When you crossed the summits of the Dragoon Mountains you were beyond the pale. Hither the stage-robber came, riding hard when the list of his crimes had grown too long. The murderer, the rustler and the outlaw spurred their ponies on eastward when the valley of the San Pedro was too hot for them and took refuge here among their kind. On occasion the bolder ones among them ventured back to show themselves on Tombstone's streets or swagger into Charleston's dance-halls; but never for long and never unless they were traveling in formidable groups.

And then sooner or later they would slip away again to the wild passes and the long and lonely valley flats where there was no law excepting that which a man carried in his pistol-holster. One after another those who were "short" in other places had drifted before the winds of public opinion to gather in this eastern end of Cochise County, where two whose qualities of deadliness surpassed those of all the rest were recognized, because of that superior ability at killing, as the big he wolves. These two were "Curly Bill" and John Ringold.

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When they were not leading their followers in some raid against the herds of border cattlemen, or lying in wait to ambush one of the armed bands of smugglers, or standing up the stage, these two were usually to be found in Galeyville. You will not see Galeyville named nowadays on the map of Arizona and if you look ever so long through the San Simon country, combing down the banks of Turkey Creek ever so closely, you will not discover so much as a fragment of crumbling adobe wall to show that the town ever existed.

But it did exist during the early eighties and its life was noisy enough for any man. There came a day when the neighboring mines shut down and the little smelter which furnished a livelihood for the honest members of the population went out of business; later the Apaches erased everything that was combustible from the landscape, and the elements finished the business.

But when John Ringold and Curly Bill held forth in Galeyville there was a cattle-buyer in the place who did a brisk business because he asked no embarrassing questions concerning brands. Which brought many a hard-eyed rustler thither and sent many a dollar spinning over the battered bars.

Such were the eastern end of Cochise County and its metropolis when Johnny Behan told young Billy Breckenbridge to cross the Dragoons and collect taxes throughout that section. If he expected a protest he was mistaken, for Breckenbridge took the bidding with his usual good-natured smile. And if the sheriff looked for a request for a posse he was disappointed. The new deputy saddled up his horse one morning and rode forth alone, trim and neat as usual, and for all that any one could see, without a care on his mind.

He rode up the wide main street which bisects Tombstone from end to end, descended the hill and started his horse across the flat-lands toward the ragged pinnacles of Cochise's Stronghold.

EASTWARD he rode through tall mesquite thickets, over rolling hills where clumps of bear-grass grew among spiked yuccas and needle-pointed tufts of Spanish bayonet, and climbed the pass beyond. From its summit he looked down upon the wide reaches of the Sulphur Springs valley, level as a floor, as tawny as a lion's skin.

Then he descended from the sky-lined pinnacles of granite to the plain. Under the blazing heavens pony and rider showed upon that glowing surface as a tiny dot; a dot that moved slowly on and on until the yellow-brown carpet of the bunch-grass came to an end and was replaced by a gleaming sheet of alkali. Before that crawling dot the mirage wavered and undulated like a weirdly painted back-drop stirring in the wind.

The dot crept on, took strange new shapes that changed phantasmly, then vanished behind the curtain of which for a passing moment it had been a part. Thus young Breckenbridge rode beyond the dominion of the written law and was swallowed up by No Man's Land.

When he had started forth from Tombstone he merely knew his errand; he owned no plan. Now as the splendid starlit nights followed the long, blazing days he began to see a course of action and this led him on, until one day he came down into the San Simon country and rode into the town of Galeyville.

The enterprising citizen whose cattle-buying business helped to keep dollars spinning across the bars of this outlaw metropolis was mildly curious when young Breckenbridge introduced himself that afternoon. The presence of a sheriff's deputy was enough to set any one to thinking in those days.

His curiosity gave way to unspoken wonder as the caller unfolded his mission and stated the name of the man whom he wanted to see. Anyhow this meeting promised to be worth while witnessing; the cattle-buyer said as much.

"Reckon we'll find him up the street right now," he added and led the way to a near-by saloon.

There were a number of men in the place when the pair entered; a quintet playing cards, and as many others scattered about a quiet pool-game. And one burly fellow was lying on a poker-table, curled up for all the world like a sleeping dog. Now and then one of the gamblers would lift his head to take a look at the newcomers, and for a brief instant young Breckenbridge would find himself gazing into a pair of hard, steady eyes. Then the eyes

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would be lowered and the player would go on with the game.

It was during this uncomfortable interval of general sizing-up that the proprietor entered, a red-faced man and short of stature. He had been out to get a bucket of water; he set the pail down by the end of the bar and filled a tin cup from it.

"Here's how, boys," he said with loud facetiousness and lifted the cup.

The burly man, who had apparently been awakened by the words, uncoiled himself, came to crouch with one arm supporting his body on the table-top and—all in the same lithe movement—drew his big-caliber revolver from the holster.

"Don't drink that stuff. It's pizen," he shouted, and with the last word his weapon flamed.

The tin cup flew from the saloonman's hand. A shout of laughter rose from the crowd at the two games; then the pool-balls clicked again and—

"Raise you ten," a poker-player said.

Breckenbridge's guide beckoned to the man who had done the shooting. He came across the room, shoving his gun back into the holster, a rather thickly built man but well knit, and there was a soft spring in his slowest movements which suggested snake-like quickness. Dark-eyed and his hair was a mat of close black curls. The cattle-buyer nodded, to indicate the introduced one.

"This," he said, "is Mr. Breckenbridge, one of Johnny Behan's deputies."

And—

"This is Curly Bill."

Young Breckenbridge smiled as usual and stretched forth his right hand. But the eyes of Curly Bill were narrow and his hand came out slowly. There was that in his whole manner which said he was on guard, watching every movement of the deputy.

And for this there was good reason. It was not long since Curly Bill had stood in very much the same attitude on Tombstone's street facing Town Marshal White, the only difference being that his right hand on that occasion had been proffering his pistol, butt foremost, to the officer. And in the passing of the instant while Marshal White had touched the weapon with his finger-tips, the forty-five had swiftly reversed ends, to spit forth one leaden slug.

The officer had dropped in the dust of the roadway and Curly Bill had ridden out here into No Man's Land with a thousand dollars on his head. A thousand dollars was a thousand dollars and there was no telling what a man who wore a nickel-plated star might have up his sleeve.

"Mr. Breckenbridge," the cattle-buyer said as the two palms met, "is here on civil business."

The eyes of Curly Bill resumed their normal shape. His fingers tightened over the deputy's.

"Howdy," he said. "What yo' going to have?"

While the sting of the cowtown whisky was still rankling in their throats a man entered the front door.

"Oh, Bill," he called across the room, "your hoss is daid."

Deserting the bar to delve into this mystery, they found the outlaw's pony stretched out beside the hitching-rack near the rear of the building. The owner cast one glance at the dead animal, then his eyes went to a shattered window.

"'Twas when I shot that cup from Shorty's hand."

He shrugged his big shoulders and, with a grin—

"Plenty more good ponies in the valley—and the nights are moonlight now."

When they were back facing the battered bar young Breckenbridge explained his business in No Man's Land.

"And this end of the county," he wound up, "is sort of rough. If I'd ride around—alone, packing that money, somebody's liable to get the best of me when I'm not looking for it. I've got to have a good man along to help take care of that roll. And I'd admire to have you make the trip with me."

Curly Bill was a great deal slower at thinking than he was at drawing his gun, and there was much food for thought in that bold proposition. He gazed at young Breckenbridge for some moments in silence. Gradually his lips relaxed. Smiling, he turned and addressed the occupants of the room.

"Boys," he cried, "line up."

And when the line was formed before the bar he waved his hand.

"This here's the deputy sheriff, come to collect the taxes in our end of the county, and I aim to help him do the job up right."

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BY WHAT means Curly Bill supplied himself with a new pony this chronicler does not know. But it is a fact that the outlaw rode forth from Galeyville the next day along with Johnny Behan's deputy, to guide the latter through the Sulphur Springs valley and the San Simon—and to guard the county's funds.

Travel was slow in those days, accommodations were few and far between. Outlaw and deputy jogged down the long, glaring flats enshrouded in the dust-fog which rose from their ponies' hoofs; mile after mile of weary riding under a scorching sun. They climbed by winding trails through narrow cañons where the heat-waves jigged endlessly among the naked rocks. They camped by lonely water-holes and shared each other's blankets under the big yellow stars.

By day they watched the sky-line seeking the slightest sign of moving forms; by night they kept their weapons within easy reach and slept lightly, awakening to the smallest sound. They scanned the earth for tracks and when they found them, read them with the suspicion born of knowledge of the country's savagery.

And sometimes other riders came toward them out of the desert to pass on and to vanish in the hazy distance; men who spoke but few words and ever watched the right hands of the two riders as they talked. But none attacked them or made a show toward hostility. Now and again the pair stopped at a ranch-house or a mine where Breckenbridge added to the county's money in his saddle-bags.

And as the days wore on, each adding its own share of mutual hardship to bring these two to closer companionship, they began, as men will under such circumstances, to unfold their separate natures. Under the long trail's stern necessity they bared to each other those traits which would have remained hidden during years of acquaintance among a city's tight-walled streets.

A carelessly spoken word dropped at hot noontide when the water in the canteens had given out; a sincere oath, uttered by the fire at supper-time; a long, drowsy conversation as they lay in their blankets with the tang of the night breeze in their nostrils, gazing up at the splendor of the flaming stars, until they knew each other man to man—and Curly Bill began to feel something like devotion to this purposeful young companion, and thenceforth he talked freely of his deeds and misdeeds.

"Only one man that ever got the drop on me," the outlaw said one evening when they were lying on their blankets, enjoying the long inhalations from their after-supper cigarets, "and that was ol' Jim Burnett over to Charleston, two years ago."

He paused a moment to roll another smoke. A coyote clamored shrilly beyond the next rise; a horse blew luxuriously, feeding in the bunch-grass. Curly Bill launched into his tale.

"He was justice of the peace and used to hold co't in those days whenever he'd run on to a man he wanted. Always packed a double-barreled shotgun and he'd usually manage to hold it down on a fellow while he tried the case and named the fine.

"Well, me and some of the boys was in town this time and things was slack. Come a Sunday evenin', and I heard how some married folks had started up a church. I hadn't been inside of one since I could remember, and we all made up our minds to go and see what it was like.

"Things had opened up when we come into the door and we took our seats as quiet as we could. But the jingle of our spurs made some people in the congregation—the' wasn't more'n a dozen of 'em—look around. And of co'se they knew us right away. So, pretty quick one or two gets up and leaves, and soon afterwards some more, until first thing we knew our bunch was all the' was stickin' it out.

"Along about that time the preacher decided he'd quit too, and he was edging off to head for the back door when I got up and told him to stop. Folks said afterwards that I throwed down my fo'ty-five on him, but that wasn't so. Wasn't any need of a gun-play. I only said that we'd come to see this deal out and we meant to have it to the turning of the last card, and if he'd go ahead everything would be all right.

"So he did, and give out a hymn and the boys stood up and sang; and he preached a sermon, taking advantage of the chanc't to light into us pretty rough. Then it come time for passin' round the hat and I'll bet the reg'lar congregation never done half so well by the collection as we did.

"Well, sir, next mo'nin' I was settin' in

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front of the hotel in the shade of those big cottonwoods, sort of dozing, having been up kind of late after the church-going; and the first thing I knew somebody was saying—

" 'Hanz-up.'

"I opened my eyes and here was ol' Jim Burnett with that double-barreled shot-gun throwed down on me. I knew there was no use tryin' to get the play away from him either; only a day or two before that he'd stuck up Johnny Harker and fined him a bunch of three-year-old steers for shootin' up the town. So I obeyed orders and—

" 'Curly Bill,' says he, 'yo're tried herewith and found guilty of disturbin' the peace at the Baptis' Church last evenin'; and the sentence of this co't is twenty-five dollars' fine.'

"I shelled out then and there and glad to do it, too. Them two muzzles was lookin' me right between the eyes all the while."

UP IN the San Simon country they ran short of grub, and after going two days on scanty rations—

"The's a cañon fifteen miles south of here," the outlaw said. "I reckon some of the boys might be camping there now."

They rode hard that afternoon and reached the place some time before sundown. The boys of whom Curly Bill had spoken were there all right, ten of them, and none of the number but was known at the time over in Tombstone either as a rustler or stage-robber. His guide introduced Breckenbridge with the usual terseness of such ceremonies among his kind.

Whatever of constraint there was at the beginning wore away during the progress of the evening, and on the next morning before they left the gorge, the young deputy worked his way into the good graces of his hosts by winning twenty dollars from them shooting at a mark.

By this time they were nearing the end of their tour and it was only a few days later, when they were crossing the Sulphur Springs valley toward the frowning Dragoons, that Curly Bill bestowed a final confidence upon his companion. They were nooning at the time, and somehow or other the usual question of revolver-handling had come up.

"I'm goin' to tell yo'-all something," said Curly Bill, "that mebbe it will come in handy to remember. Now here."

He drew his forty-five and held it forth butt-foremost in his right hand.

"Don't ever go to take a man's gun thataway," he went on, "for when yo' are figgering that yo' have the drop on him and he is makin' the play to give it up— Jest reach out now to get it."

Breckenbridge reached forth with his right hand. The outlaw smiled. His trigger finger glided inside the guard; there was a sudden wrist movement and the revolver had whirled end for end. Its muzzle was pressing against the deputy's waist-band.

"Did it slow so's you could see," said Curly Bill. "Now yo' understand."

And Breckenbridge nodded, knowing now the manner in which Marshal White had met his death on the day when his companion had fled from the law to No Man's Land.

In No Man's Land they shook hands at parting.

"So long," said Curly Bill. "See you later."

And the deputy answered with like brevity, then rode on to Tombstone. Those who had banked on the big issue wherein Breckenbridge would smell the other man's powder-smoke were disappointed. And there were some among them who shook their heads when the young fellow's name was mentioned saying, as they had said in the beginning—

"Wait till the showdown comes; then we'll see how he stacks up."

BUT Sheriff Johnny Behan was open in his rejoicings. For the sheriff's enemies were many and some of them were powerful, and his conduct in office was being subjected to a great deal of harsh criticism, oftentimes, it must be noted, with entire justice. So when the smiling young deputy returned from a region where Cochise County had hitherto been unable to gather any taxes, and deposited a sum wherein every property-owner in that region was properly represented, here was good news with which to counteract accusations of laxity.

And that was not all. So far as law and order went, the country east of the Dragoons was a foreign land; and when Breckenbridge had told the story of his journeyings with Curly Bill, explaining how the

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outlaw had been zealous in nosing out those citizens whose property was assessable, how he had safeguarded the county's money, then the sheriff saw how he had on his force one whom he could use to good account.

Other officials were unable to carry the law into No Man's Land; but he had, thenceforth, at least an envoy. And he knew that there would be times when diplomatic representation was going to come in very handy.

From that day on, when anything came up in the Sulphur Springs valley or in the San Simon, Billy Breckenbridge was dispatched to attend to the matter. Time and again he made the journey, until the cowmen in the lowlands came to know his face well, until the sight of a deputy sheriff's star was no longer an unwonted spectacle in Galeyville. And as the months went by he enlarged the list of his acquaintances among the outlaws.

But his errands were for the most part concerned with civil matters. Now and again there was a warrant for stock-rustling, but the rustlers carried on their business in the open at that time and there were few who dared to testify against them. Bail was always arranged by the accommodating cattle-buyer at Galeyville. So such arrests invariably turned out to be amicable affairs.

Among those who were sitting back and waiting for the big showdown, there was a little stir of anticipation when young Breckenbridge rode forth armed with a warrant for John Ringold. For Ringold was a bad-man of larger caliber than even Curly Bill, the brains of the outlaws, and the warrant charged highway robbery.

But the thrill died away when the deputy came riding back with his man; and there was something like disgust among the waiting ones when it was learned that the prisoner had stayed behind in Galeyville to arrange some of his affairs and had ridden hard to catch up with his captor at the Sulphur Springs ranch.

Anticipation flamed again a little later, and it looked as if there was good reason for it. For this time it was a stolen horse and Breckenbridge had set forth to recover the animal. A rustler might be willing to go through the formalities of giving bail at the county court-house, or even to stand trial, but when it came to turning over stolen property—and doing it without a struggle—that was another matter. Moreover this horse, which had been taken from the Contention Mine, was a thoroughbred, valued highly and coveted by many a man. There was good ground for believing that the fellow who had made off with him would put up a fight before letting him go again.

Now when he left Tombstone on this mission Johnny Behan's young diplomatic representative was riding a rented pony, his own mount being fagged out from a previous journey; and this fact has its bearing on the story later on. The wild country is always easier ground in which to trace a fugitive or stolen property than the crowded places for the simple reason that its few inhabitants are likely to notice every one who passes; besides which there are few travelers to obliterate tracks.

And Breckenbridge learned before he had gone very many miles that the badly wanted horse was headed in the direction of the MacLowery ranch. The MacLowery boys were members of the Clanton gang of rustlers and stage-robbers. It did not need a Sherlock Holmes to figure out the probabilities of where that horse was being pastured now. Breckenbridge pressed on to the MacLowery place.

Night had fallen when he arrived, and the barking of many dogs heralded his approach to all the surrounding country. Breckenbridge knew the MacLowery boys well, as well as he knew the Clantons and a dozen other outlaws, which was well enough to call one another by their first names.

But these were ticklish times. The big Earp-Clanton feud was nearing its climax. The members of the latter faction—several of whom were wanted on Federal warrants which charged them with stage robbery—were keeping pretty well holed up, as the saying is, and it was not any too unlikely that, if any of them were in the ranch-house at the time, the visitor who was not extremely skilful in announcing himself would be shot first and questioned afterward.

SO WHEN Billy Breckenbridge came to the house he did not draw rein but kept right on as if he were riding past. And now Fortune favored him by interposing in his path an enormous

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puddle, almost a pond, the overflow from a broken irrigation ditch. Here he pulled up and hallooed loudly.

"Any way through here?" he shouted. "This is Breckenbridge."

A moment's silence, and then a streak of light showed where the front door had been opened a crack.

"Sit quiet on that there hoss," a gruff voice commanded, "and lemme see if you *be* Breckenbridge."

"Hello, Bill," the deputy sheriff answered. "Yes, it's me all right."

And Curly Bill opened the door wider, revealing his burly form.

"Put up yo'r pony in the corral," he said, "and come in."

And when Breckenbridge had complied with the last part of the invitation he found the bare room filled with men. The MacLowery boys were there, two of them, and the Clantons. Half a dozen other outlaws were lounging about, and Curly Bill himself was looking none too pleasant as he nodded to the visitor.

"Cain't tell who might come ridin' in these nights," he growled by way of explanation for his curt welcome. "Set up and eat a bite now yo're here."

The lateness of the meal and the general dishevelment of the room's occupants made it clear to the guest that he had stumbled into a general conference. Every one had been riding hard that day, unless appearances lied. It was an awkward moment, and the constraint endured long after the last man had shoved back his chair and rolled his brown-paper cigaret.

Curly Bill found an opportunity to get young Breckenbridge off to one side during the evening.

"What's on yore mind?" he asked.

The deputy told him.

"The superintendent owns that horse," he explained, "and he's a good friend of mine. Not only that, but if I get it back it means a whole lot to the office; it'll put Behan solid with those people over at Contention, and that helps me a whole lot."

The outlaw nodded but made no remark by way of comment. Some time later he sat up at the oilcoth-covered table talking quietly with Frank MacLowery. And Breckenbridge saw MacLowery scowling. Then he felt reasonably sure who had stolen that blooded animal and who was going to bring it back to Tombstone in the morning.

Bedding-rolls were being unlashed within the half-hour. MacLowery brought Breckenbridge a pair of blankets.

"Reckon you'll have to make down on the floor same as the rest of the boys," the outlaw growled and then, as if it were an afterthought, "That there hoss you're looking fer is near the ranch."

And that was all the talk there was on the subject that evening. But Breckenbridge spread his blankets and lay down among the rustlers serene in mind. Evidently the horse was going to be in his possession the next morning.

MacLowery's sullenness seemed to have been contagious and there were no good nights said to the guest. He knew every man in the room; some of them he had known ever since that evening when Curly Bill had taken him to the rustlers' camp in the San Simon. But the best he got from any of them was an averted look; several were scowling openly. Even Curly Bill had put aside his usual heavy joviality. It was clear enough that the burly leader had strained a point in going as far as he had. Some men might have felt uneasy in dropping off to sleep under the circumstances, but Breckenbridge understood his hosts well enough to be certain that, so long as he was on the ranch, the sacred rites of hospitality were going to be observed. So he closed his eyes and the last thing he heard was the snoring of outlaws and murderers.

The next morning he awakened to find that several of the company had departed. No one made any comment on that fact, and there was no mention of the stolen horse. But when the deputy had downed his last cup of coffee Frank MacLowery took him outside and showed him the animal tethered to a hitching-rack.

"Much obliged, Frank," said Breckenbridge.

The stage-robber gave him a sour grin.

"Bet yo' never fetch him back to Tombstone," he answered quietly.

The two looked into each other's eyes and smiled. You may have seen a pair of fighters smiling in that same way when the gong has sounded and they have put up their hands at the beginning of a finish contest.

Now under these circumstances, and remembering the absence of several of the best horsemen in the bunch from the ranch-house, many a man would have put his

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saddle on the thoroughbred that morning. But Breckenbridge had managed to assimilate some of the wiles of diplomacy during these last few months and he reasoned that—if there were a pursuing-party waiting for him to leave the ranch—they would be prepared for that same contingency. Better let them think him unprepared; then perhaps they would let him get the lead. And once he got it, luck would have to do the rest. He saddled the hired pony and rode away, leading the recovered animal.

Before he had gone a half-mile beyond the ranch-buildings he saw how he had figured rightly. The floor of the Sulphur Springs valley did not hold so much as a bush by way of cover; and here, off to the left, his eyes fell on a group of horsemen. Evidently they had been watching him ever since he left the corrals and knew the poorness of his mount, for they were making no effort to overhaul him as yet.

But he realized that the gang must have graver matters on hand than the recovery of the thoroughbred; they were not going to waste any too much time over this affair and he would not be allowed to travel far if they could help it. Just then a wagon-outfit climbed out of a dry wash directly ahead of him and he saw how luck had given him a chance.

He rode on, leisurely closing in upon the wagons. Off there to the left the outlaws were keeping pace with him, but as yet they were making no attempt to lessen the distance between them. He came up with the last wagon, turned off the road beside it and had the clumsy covered vehicle between him and the rustlers. Then he dismounted.

The wagons kept on moving; now and again the teamsters glanced toward him curiously. He barely heeded them save to see that they made no sign to the now invisible outlaws. It took all the skill that he owned to keep both his horses walking while he unsaddled the one and threw the saddle upon the other. But at last the change was made and he flung himself upon the thoroughbred's back. Shouting to the nearest teamster to lead the abandoned pony back to Tombstone, he put spurs to his fresh mount and came out in the road ahead of the foremost wagon on a dead run.

There were six of the outlaws and they were less than half a mile away. Breckenbridge had been out of sight behind the wagons just a little too long to suit them and they were cutting in toward the road, now at top speed.

From the beginning it was a stern chase, and they had only one hope of winning. Nothing less speedy than a bullet could ever catch that thoroughbred. They pulled up at once and started shooting. But although some of the slugs from their rifles came uncomfortably close none found its mark and Breckenbridge was fast drawing away from them. However they were not the men to give up so long as there was any chance remaining and they swung back into their saddles to "burn up the road" in his wake.

Now all hands settled down to make a long race of it, and it was not until he was climbing the first slopes toward South Pass in the Dragoon Mountains that Breckenbridge looked back for the last time and saw the shapes of those six horsemen diminishing in the distance as they jogged back toward the MacLowery ranch.

So through the good-will of Curly Bill young Breckenbridge recovered the thoroughbred from the man who had stolen it and brought it to Tombstone without being obliged to reach for his own gun. And moreover there were no hard feelings about it when he rode back into No Man's Land the next time. So far as Frank MacLowery and the Clanton boys were concerned, the incident was closed. The deputy had won out and that was all there was to it.

As a matter of fact only a month or so later a horse-thief from Lincoln County, New Mexico, came to grief at Galeyville because he did not understand Breckenbridge's status in the rustlers' metropolis. This bad-man from the Pecos had a pretty sorrel pony and Breckenbridge, who was in the place on civil business, happened to notice the animal at the hitching-rack in front of the hotel.

"Say," he said to its possessor, who was standing, "that's a nice horse; where'd you get him?"

The remark was a careless one in a country where ponies often changed owners overnight, and the man from the Pecos was sensitive enough on the subject to resent the question from one who wore a star. He answered it by drawing his gun.

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Breckenbridge, who was as dexterous with his left hand as with his right, reached down as the weapon came forth from its holster and gripped the stranger's wrist. He gave a sharp wrench and the revolver clattered down on the sidewalk. And then Curly Bill, who had witnessed the incident, stepped forward and ordered the Lincoln County bad-man out of Galeyville.

"Yo'-all don't need to think," the desperado added, "that you can come here and make a gun-play on our deputy. We get along all right with him and I reckon we ain't goin' to stand for any cow-thieves from Lincoln County gettin' brash with him."

SOMETHING like two years had passed now since young Billy Breckenbridge first rode across the Dragoon Mountains into No Man's Land and, as the old-timers who had been watching him all this time well knew, things could not go on in this way forever. The showdown was bound to come. It came one day at the Chandler ranch and the old-timers got the answer to their question.

There were two young fellows by the name of Zwing Hunt and Billy Grounds who had been working at S. M. Morse's sawmill over in the Chiracahua Mountains. Somehow or other they had got mixed up with the stock-rustlers and the temptation to make easy money proved too strong for them. One evening they went over to the Contention mill and held up the place, killing the man in charge.

Johnny Behan was out of town at the time with several deputies after the Earps who had departed from Tombstone. The undersheriff detailed Breckenbridge on the case and drafted a posse of three men to help him.

"No, sir," the undersheriff said when the young deputy remonstrated against the presence of these aides. "This ain't a case of talking John Ringold into coming over and putting up a bond. This here's murder and those lads are going to put up a fight."

Orders were orders; there was no use arguing further. The erstwhile diplomat made the best of a bad matter and rode away with his three companions. It was evening when they left Tombstone, and the Chandler ranch lay several hours distant. Those who saw them leave the camp spread the news. This time the old-timers settled down, certain that when Billy Breckenbridge returned they were going to know just what he was made of.

He came back the next evening, riding alongside a lumber-wagon. In those days the mining-companies maintained a hospital at the edge of the town. The vehicle made one stop at this institution and unloaded three of its occupants. It made a second stop before the establishment of a local undertaker, where two bodies were removed. And then young Breckenbridge rode on alone to the court-house. Two outlaws and four men in the deputy sheriff's party makes six altogether. Out of the six he was the only one left on his feet.

"And the hull thing didn't last five minutes," said "Bull" Lewis, the driver of the wagon. "I was asleep in the ranch-house along with these two outlaws when some one knocked on the door. Right away I heard a shot in the next room and I busted out with my hands up and yelling that I was a nootral. Before I'd gone twenty yards Hunt and Grounds had killed two of the posse and by the time I was over that rise behind the house they'd laid out the other. And then I watched this little deputy get the two of them.

"He was out in the open and they were inside, and the two of 'em were sure burnin' powder mighty fast. But he waited his chance and tore the top of Grounds' head off with a charge of buckshot when he stepped to the door to get a better shot. And a second or two later Zwing Hunt came out of the cabin, firing as he ran. The little fellow dropped him with a bullet from his forty-five before he'd come more'n a half a dozen jumps."

But Breckenbridge was a long way from being jubilant when Johnny Behan and the undersheriff congratulated him on his behavior.

"If you hadn't wished those three fellows on me I'd have brought both these boys back without firing a shot," he told the undersheriff. "The blamed posse made such a noise coming up to the cabin that the two of 'em thought 'twas a lynching-party and opened fire on us. Yes, sir. I could have talked them into coming—if I'd only been alone."

And so when it did finally come to the showdown all hands learned of just what material young Breckenbridge was made.

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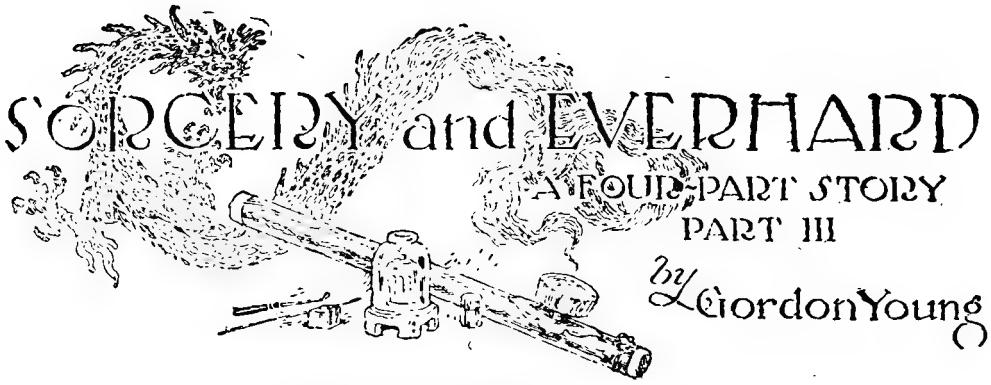

Author of "The Frame-up," "Bluffed," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

THE report that I, Don Everhard, had been murdered in Pittsburgh reached me while I was looking for Hurgronje in San Francisco. Hurgronje was a magician who had used his "magic" to murder my friend Madame Kraschenin and steal her jewels. I had recovered the jewels; now I was playing my cards craftily to "get" Hurgronje while he still believed I had been murdered by one of his gang.

My quest brought me into the apartment of a foppish crook, "Lord Bob" Calversley. I sat there alone about midnight when Zoronna Symondi, Sorceress, rushed in.

Zoronna was in trouble. She appealed to me for help. I knew her anxiety was caused by something concerning Hurgronje, for he had her, like many other women, in his power. I went with her in a limousine to her apartment. She was bewitchingly pretty, truly a sorceress.

I had no sooner arrived than the door-bell rang. I slipped behind a screen and one of Zoronna's lovers, Remy Cantello, entered.

His conversation with Zoronna was that of a lover crazed by jealousy. He embraced her, and when she pushed him aside the screen fell. I faced Remy with my coat and hat pulled about my face and a gun in each hand.

I went through Remy's pockets and took much jewelry, pretending that I was a burglar. I forced Zoronna to bind Remy, and I bound and gagged Zoronna, but lightly. Then I left the room.

IN MY subsequent conversation with Lord Bob I tried unsuccessfully to learn more of Hurgronje. But Lord Bob cleverly evaded my questions. Only when I poured my jewels on the table did he appear to be interested. Then the telephone rang. It was Zoronna. She insisted on seeing Lord Bob that night.

I went early that night to Zoronna's apartment. Her French maid refused to let me pass, and I was forced, after a tussle, to bind and gag her.

Finally Zoronna came in, accompanied by Remy Cantello. I hid. Remy began his love-making, but a knock at the door drove him into hiding. I hoped the newcomer was Hurgronje. But instead Lord Bob sauntered in.

Zoronna told Lord Bob that she was in Hurgronje's power and suggested that they use me as a tool to kill Hurgronje. Lord Bob would not consent to this. He would not betray a friend like me. Then Lord Bob, too, began to make love to Zoronna.

It happened in a flash. Remy burst out of his hiding-place and the next second he was lying dead on the floor. Zoronna clasped a small blood-stained dagger.

Lord Bob led Zoronna into the next room and I made my exit by the fire-escape.

The next day, while the police were hot on the murder-clues, I set out to locate my old friend, Madame Hazel Guigane who was living at that time in the Chinese quarter.

CHAPTER VI

SOME one who knows more about opium users than I, will have to explain why it is that even the wealthiest and, to some extent, the most refined of them do not seem to feel quite satisfied unless they get down into the most disreputable quarter to use the pipe. But oddly enough, having come down into that quarter, they like to be given bizarre comforts and matchless luxuries.

I have it on the authority of Madame Guigane that it is so; and Madame Guigane knows much about it. For many years she has vanished from the quarter since she maintained in one place and another an "establishment" for wealthy profligates and —I suppose one must call them—degenerates. She moved frequently; that is, two or three times a year; but her place was never

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successfully raided. She took the precaution of paying somebody to tip her off. Who that "somebody" was I shall not intimate, though she very frankly told his name; but it would be libelous to repeat it.

And while it has nothing to do with my part of the story, I must pause to make an exception in the statement that her place was never successfully raided. It was, once. A very important official whom one might as well call the mayor, just to give an idea of his importance, was determined to wipe out the opium dens.

He was so bitter against them that he would not listen to reason—to the "reason" of advisors whom it would have been convenient to heed, since they explained that you couldn't wipe out opium until the poppy-fields of Holkar and Kweickow, of Bengal and Algeria, were plowed under and salted; that not till every Chinaman in America had the last drop of blood drained from his veins would it be possible to eradicate the dives; and that any determined warfare on them would only increase the extraordinary ingenuity and evasiveness of the "fiends," so that the wise thing to do was to maintain a tolerant vigilance over conditions as they were.

But the mayor was stubborn; he was thought to have a personal bitterness against the drug; and, learning of Madame Guigane, he personally led the raid. She was warned in ample time, but she did not run. No doors were broken down. The mayor and police raced in, and they found one woman—just one smoker—nodding dreamily amid the banks of yellow eider-down cushions.

The mayor, as if stopped by a blow on the head, looked down at this pretty woman who was lost to all realization of what was going on about her. Then a blinding flash; the room was filled with the acrid powder-smoke; voices shouted and the police beat against walls; but the photograph of the mayor confronting his wife was not recovered, and Madame Guigane did not once move her "establishment" as long as he remained in office; which, however, was not long, for he resigned because of ill health.

I have told that not only because it is interesting, but because it will do much to convey an appreciation of the cruelty and audacity of Madame Guigane, who was quite tender-hearted in some ways. I have no wish to defend her character. I do not care anything about her character, though for some reason she took it for granted that I regarded her as a friend; and, since she often knew more about many things than any other person I cared to talk with, I occasionally met her.

But in speaking of her tender-heartedness I mean only to say that this woman—who was as much of a female vampire as woman can be, since she ruined bodies and souls, and was as coldly mercenary as only a woman can be—every two or three years—maybe more often—became the guardian of some orphan child, sent the child away to school, wrote notes to and received letters from it, and made provision for the child's upbringing and education.

Madame Guigane concealed this philanthropy as if it were the one real shameful thing of her life. But she was merciless; she would drain one of her shattered victims of his—or her—last trinket, and when no more dollars or trinkets were forthcoming, send the wretch to beg a pinch of *yen-shee* from some humane Chinaman.

And either because she really knew, or was superstitious about it, she insisted that her "people" (customers) would leave her if she moved into a reputable part of the city.

"They would come down here and lie on a bare plank in a dirt cellar," she said; and explained that they liked, too, the thrilling excitement of sneaking fearfully through the dirty alleys and getting undetected into her bare, dim hallways.

Oh, yes. A smoker would smoke any place, but to enjoy it to the uttermost it was necessary to get down into Chinatown, particularly for "opium parties."

She had any number of little rooms that afforded privacy, and likely as not would have them on the top floor of a dirty lodging-house, where below would be the shrunken, drunken wastrels that stumbled in from the street. Her rooms would be hung with silken curtains, warmed with gas grates, the low brocaded divans covered with thick pillows, soft as lambs' fleece, and the rough board floors covered with carpets thick as a man's wrist. The colors were fiercely vivid—crimson, yellow, black, green; pure colors, unshaded.

Sometimes a brilliant parrot would be chained to a pole in the room; but she found this an expensive detail, as the birds sickened quickly. It seems to impair opiate delight to permit the entrance of fresh air;

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the tiny, narrow rooms would soon be thickened with fumes, and the air further vitiated on chilly nights by the grate. Yet for hours two or more people would lie there, talking, dozing, or in that sleepless dreamy daze which—she assured me I know nothing about it—is the enchanting Heaven of the pipe.

She was a wonderful "cook," a preparer of pipes. I have watched her, but beyond the fact that she seemed deft I knew nothing of her skill. She assured me that it was an art—a real art—to dip that spatulate needle—spatulate at one end, and delicately sharp at the other—into the stuff not unlike black molasses, twirl it over the lamp as the little daub that has adhered to the needle bubbles and swells, changes color and fills the air with a sickeningly sweet odor— That was a part of "real art" she assured me.

It was only as a rare and expensive favor that she would "cook" for her "guests." She had Chinese boys to do that when the "guests" did not feel themselves adept enough.

"Why," she had exclaimed once upon a time when I looked unimpressed, "I cook for Sin Chang—when I feel like it! Put it down in your note-book that he pays for it, too! . . . Know him? I know him better than my right hand, and have no more use for him than I would have for my hand if it was cut off."

That was why I was going to Madame Guigane.

IT TOOK almost an hour and some money to find out where her "establishment" was now located. I was directed to the second floor of a two-story building, of which the ground-floor was used for a dirty chop-suey joint.

The chop-suey joint made it rather convenient for Madame Guigane's "guests." They could sneak up the back way after threading through a narrow, unlighted alley-like passage, or more openly, pretending to be slumming, enter the joint and pass through a booth into a stairway concealed by a sliding wall.

The sliding wall and concealed stairs were not precautions against police interference, or to keep out meddling vice-crusaders, so much as to give the "guests" the thrill of being furtive and secretive. I know this because I went straight from the street up to the second floor as one goes to the second floor of any public building from the street.

I came out into a bare, dim lobby; it had been a lodging-house hall, but a wall had been built across it. I rang a bell, and was no doubt carefully inspected through a peep-hole before a shabby Chinaman shuffled out interrogatingly.

"Wat want?"

"Madame."

"Ma'am? No ma'am. W'ong placee."

"Madame Guigane."

"No savee Ma'am Gugin. W'ong placee."

Evidently I did not know the pass-word or some other open-sesame.

The Chinaman was retreating backward toward the door; but I jerked him to one side, shoved him against the wall and backed through the door myself, locking it. He set up a terrific squealing.

The hallway was dimly lighted—a precaution, I suppose, to reassure timid "guests" that they would not be recognized in case they met any one while being shown to their rooms. It was empty when I first closed the door; but many little active shapes tumbled out, peering and jabbering; then from somewhere at the other end of the hall a larger form, a woman's, came out.

Lights clicked on and she advanced, with no surprize or alarm in her face, but a great deal of firm unwelcome. She was occasionally annoyed by intruders; and an "intruder" was usually some person whom she had decided to bar from further visits.

As she came nearer the expression on her face changed rapidly to surprize, then wonderment. She stopped in front of me and stared. I said nothing; I did nothing.

"Good ——, are you a ghost?" jesting and just a trifle doubtful of her eyes.

I assured her that I was not.

"Then give me your hand—but if it's cold and clammy I'll scream!"

She did not scream. She held the hand a few seconds, pulling and pinching the fingers as if to reassure herself. I withdrew my hand, and she scattered the Chinese with a gesture and some words, telling somebody to let in the doorkeeper, who was still squealing.

Madame Guigane was not a "rough" woman, though she was by no means delicate; nor would she likely be mistaken for "cultured." She made a frequent use of

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"——" and "——," and on occasion, of more strenuous words; which, in these days as in those of good Queen Anne, may rather signify high spirit in a lady, since I understand that the most respectable women swear a little as well as paint their lips and shave eyebrows.

"Come on," she said. "I'm starved for a talk."

And she led me down the hall and into one of the rooms with its oppressive, sense-distracting colors.

"I said they'd never get you asleep—unless you were doped. About as hard to dope you as a saint on a fast—don't smoke, don't eat, don't drink, and don't believe a woman. Mother of Satan, you ought've been a preacher!"

At her gesture I leaned against a heap of pillows almost to my waist, and, sitting, sank down, down, down until my knees were higher than my chin. She laughed.

"Put your feet up. Be comfortable."

As there was no chair in the room I had looked around with a kind of baffled expression that amused her. I feel awkward when lying down except for purpose of sleep, so I stood up.

She sank back into another pile of cushions and struck a bell. Almost at once some one scratched at the door, and she had a chair brought to me.

"Now tell me about yourself."

She lay forward watchfully, apparently interestedly. It is no wonder that women make fools of men. Even I felt the warm urge to tell her all about everything for no other reason than that she was not an unattractive woman who had put on an enticing expression of eagerness. But I did not tell her anything more than I retrospectively could approve.

She said:

"Come along, preacher-boy. Who've you been saving from continuing in the evil path? And the papers did things nicely for you. Wonder what they'll say of me? 'Madame Hazel Guigane, Queen of the Hop-Heads, croaked this A.M. Thank God.' But you! What happened at Pittsburg anyway?"

MADAME GUIGANE probably knew her own age. I doubt if any one else did. It is a very stupid woman who can not continue to look thirty for at least fifteen years. I had known her for nearly half that many. She was not small, she was very nearly stately in fact, and wore a magnificent blonde wig. She had assured me that it was the original, natural color of the hair; and that it was her own.

"I paid fifteen hundred dollars for it!"

Which, I reflected, ought to have been enough to make any woman feel that the hair she wore was her own.

"A woman's hair is her crowning glory," she had said. "And like most women who wear crowns, I took it from the head of another woman."

Her eyes were dark, very dark; so that the contrast between the wonderful yellow hair and the black eyes was arresting. Her features were what is called "good," but rather hard. Her voice was not pleasant, though neither hoarse nor harsh. It was cold, devoid of the soft, nearly inaudible, overtones that give sweetness to the voices of many women.

She wore heavy, black-pendent earrings and many rings. Her long fingers were stained, perhaps with opium. I do not know how much was from opium, how much from cigarets.

She smoked cigarets all the time, which may account in part for the voice. She said that the cigarets were not doped. However, I could not see why she should feel much virtue on that account; she used a pipe, and when we first became acquainted used to beg me to try it with her.

"Just to see how you like it. . . . Oh, once won't hurt you. . . . Don't be a fool. . . . Just get the sensation . . . once. . . . Come on. . . . What you afraid of? . . . Oh, go to —— then!"

Which, I reminded her, was a strange injunction to bestow upon one who had resisted temptation. And for answer she gave me a long, hard, enigmatic stare.

It is true, I suppose, though she would never admit it, that opium-smokers get a satisfaction out of pulling others into the habit. How else can a habit that requires so much of a layout, so much preparation, and, so I have been told, so much "skill," have increased so rapidly in all directions?

One may, so far as I can guess, more or less by accident get into the use of other drugs—be after something to run off insomnia, or be taught in their use by doped medicines; but—I am not being "scientific;" I am only expressing deductions—to smoke

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opium there must be a good deal of assistance, if not actual urge, from other people.

Well, anyway the upshot of my relations with Madame Guigane was that she insisted on my regarding her as a good friend; and as she never seemed to be after anything—I certainly do not like to be a cat'spaw for a woman—everything was agreeable.

I told her what I wanted and she said that it could be arranged easily enough; but woman-like wanted to know all about it. What I asked was nothing more than that she see that the message I had in the envelop be delivered to Sin Chang, and I suggested that it be done in such way that he could not know that either she or I had a hand in it. Of course she wanted to know all about what I was up to, and would not believe me when I assured her that I had no relations with the Chinaman.

She took the envelop and weighed it carefully.

"Don, if you don't tell me what's in it I'll pick off this seal."

"That seal was on it when I took it from a dead man's pocket."

"Don! You have the most devilish way of saying things. Makes my flesh creep. Preacher! Ugh. You ought've been an undertaker. I suppose he bumped into you, or something."

I explained that I had had nothing to do with the man's ill fortune.

"How'd you know it was ill?" she snapped, lying back and closing her eyes so that the heavily beaded lashes lay like dark rings on her cheeks.

But after a moment of reflection she came up with widened eyes to extort information out of me, though she did not learn much.

At last I asked her, and I had no thought of asking any such question when I came, what she would do if I kidnaped a young woman and brought her to the "Portal of Dreams"—Madame Guigane, half in irony I suspected, always gave her "establishment" some such title of beauty—"and brought her to you to take care of?"

"Why, I'd kill her," she said simply.

The remark was so unexpected, the manner of saying it so simply earnest, that I looked at her; though of course I knew very well that she jested.

"Don, there are times when I hate you—hate you!"

There was nothing simple about that. She quite hissed it as she raised up and leaned toward me, her eyes blazing.

That is the worst of women. One never knows what they are up to, or why. And as I have told some people, a thousand men, lying and acting their best, can not deceive me, bewilder me—all of them together—can not leave me so much at loss as almost any woman in about ten minutes.

THEN Madame Guigane laughed merrily, and put out her hand reassuringly.

"No, Don. Bring on your fair maiden. Nothing will happen to her under my roof. Is she pretty?"

"I guess so. She seems to make a fool of everybody she wants to."

"And you?"

"Not that way."

"What way, then?"

"I was just thinking that occasion might arise in which I would kidnap her. I don't want her.

"She calls herself a 'sorceress.' More open about it than most of you women. Maybe that's what has put me on guard. Just as you were saying a while ago, there may be worse things than death——"

"I never said——"

"Same thing. I'd never give her a second thought if she caught pneumonia or something. She's not the sort of woman that ever dies of pneumonia, though."

"You ought to run a charade column for a boy's paper."

And there I was, trying to explain something without confiding anything. So I shifted the subject, and asked if Sin Chang really did own a "slave market."

I couldn't have stirred Madame Guigane so much if I had struck her with a red-hot poker. She was up and swearing in an instant. Sin Chang, "big yellow spider," did. She had seen the poor little blossoms, all tricked out in embroidered silk blouses and trousers, black hair combed sleek and screwed down in tight coils over the ears, faces powdered and painted—she had seen them hundreds of times fluttering behind their wooden bars, peering and wondering, and whispering excitedly.

She went rattling on. Of course the girls didn't complain. They wouldn't have complained if they had been lined up and strangled. Flower-boat girls, all of them.

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Brought up from babyhood to think a man was part god.

Sin Chang made money out of them, enormous money. Every lousy coolie that gets into business or wins a lottery wants one. City was full of low-breed Chinks that had made money, and the airs they put on!

What was Sin Chang himself? Born in a sampan at Woosung. Fed off the garbage caught in a net from the galley sluices of visiting ships! Now look at him. Fat as Buddha himself.

Then the secret came out: Sin Chang had once suggested to Madame Guigane that for the financial advantage of both it might be well if they were married. He would be an unforgiven Chinaman to the day of his death, to the last tick of eternity!

"— told him I'd stick him on the end of a needle, toast him over a lamp and roll him into a pea for the devil's pipe! Can you—can you imagine such a thing? And he just sat there with his hands on his big fat stomach and face like a baby's and said he wasn't sure, but he was inclined to believe that Flower of Heaven—meaning me!—did not look with favor upon his humble offer. Well—well—then I did make myself clear!"

"And then? And now?"

She gave a little gesture with both hands, suggestive of helplessness.

"I have to haye poppy-birds in my business. Sin Chang has the market between his toes. We're friends now; but—" and a savage gleam came into her black eyes—"but he knows better than to offer any more suggestions like that one to me."

Then I threw my bombshell at her. Understand that I had no intention of doing anything of the kind when I came. As a matter of fact, I was moving over uncertain ground. But I asked if she would do anything to prevent Sin Chang from getting his hands on to a beautiful girl who was likely to be bartered by a devil ten times worse than any Chinaman—who was likely to be sold for a ruby.

To my very great surprize Madame Guigane appeared uninterested, merely asking between half-closed eyes—

"Who is she?"

I told her what I suspected, of Hurgronje—something of Hurgronje; not my personal affair with him—and his madness over gems; "which has, I understand, been considerably increased recently by the loss of a collection he valued very highly."

"Why are *you* so interested?" she demanded with something very much like suspicion, though there was nothing to be suspicious over.

"There's a friend of mine involved, for one thing."

"What's her name?"

"Whose name?"

"Your friend's?"

I told her my friend's name was a man's name.

She made some kind of dubious, unsatisfied sound, and, propping her head on her palm, lay amid the cushions for a long time without saying anything, but watched me closely. At last with a chilliness that I resented she asked—

"Why come to me?"

I told her that I had not come to her for any help in that matter; but that, having come, I had thought of it, that I was perfectly able to go on with it myself, and intended to do so, though it was rather queer that I should since the woman herself was no friend to me, as I had good reason to know; but that all I had to go by was the feeling that I ought to do whatever I felt ought to be done—which might be rather complicated; but I wasn't going to stand by and see a white woman sold bodily to any man, white, yellow or black, simply because she happened to hate me.

I picked up my hat and coat. I had expressed myself with sufficient clearness, though with a little more feeling and length of sentence than usual. And I meant her to understand that strangers could scarcely have less relation between them than we would have from then on. I was leaving.

But there is no understanding women. In a tone of weary exasperation she said:

"Sit down, Don. Sit down. My trade doesn't start till around midnight, and you are not taking up my time. . . . I *know* you didn't mention that. . . .

"Now listen to me, you dear idiot. You can't expect a woman in my business, who hears all manner of wild stories every night, to get very agitated over a simple little tale like yours. You ought to take to the pipe, or to booze, or coke—or even chew gum; do something to humanize you. I'll do anything in the wide world—anything—to help you rescue your poor little maiden in distress. I'm not joking—and don't look at me that way."

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She sat up, smiling, and in a tone of pleasantry added:

"But there are times when I *could* kill you. For one thing, Don Everhard, you are so stupid! Yes, stupid. S-t-u-p-i-d. Stupid."

Her manner changed slightly, became earnest—or seemingly so—and she pointed her hand at me.

"Now listen again. You don't know any more about women than a wooden doll. Not so much. Baby girls do play with wooden dolls. And if you think for one minute that the distressed damsel hates you, really hates you, and she has made you sure of it—Don, don't waste a minute, but go right out and buy a solitaire. It doesn't have to be a big one either. She'll be glad to get it."

All of which was nonsense; and I told her so.

The Lord forgot to put in balance-wheels when He made women. They can't reason as straight as a snake can crawl. They go round like a pin-wheel and think they are getting some place. I am a man of patience. There weren't any women among the delegation that called on Job, but as it was, *his* patience was worn out.

I STARTED out of the door. She jumped up and caught my arm; and when I said that I had been serious, and that though I had as much humor as anybody needed I did not offer myself twice to be laughed at, she laughed.

Then she did show some real indignation at the idea of a girl, a white girl, being sold to a man, and such a man as Sin Chang; and she made me think that she was sincere in begging that I would let her know what was going on, and give her a chance to do anything that was needed. So it was that at heart Madame Guigane seemed quite as human as I had always thought she would be.

I know that it would be getting myself into a muddle to try to explain why one so callously engaged in so viciously evil a business should be credited with any humaneness of heart—but that is one of the complexities, not of women alone, but of human nature. The murderer may weep when his little canary dies; the mother who has strangled her children may break into tears at the withering of a hyacinth in her cell; the highwayman will likely enough feel an angry flush to see a big boy rob a small one of a candy stick; and though those are not emotions that make atonement they are human, and should do something to show that crime and evilness are kinks and quirks of brains much like your own rather than the work of inhumane, unnatural people.

I have had some familiarity with crooks and such; and though I never reformed anybody, or tried to, I believe that a very large percentage of them could have been made into respectable, perhaps indeed into distinguished citizens, if given some work that would afford them excitement, draw on their resourcefulness and ingenuity, and use up their enormous nervous energy—with which all successful crooks are filled. This panacea of mine may not, however, apply to such as have for deep and obscured personal reasons been embittered; as, for instance, there were times when I felt that Hazel Guigane was getting a sort of cruel satisfaction—to her, very much like revenge—out of seeing people who used opium made into pitiful wrecks.

Even she had her brood of orphans, and I don't think it so very fanciful to suppose that sometimes there were maybe a tear or two on the letters from those thankful little waifs whom she had never seen, and never would see.

SOME impertinent person has told me that I make a very profuse use of the first person, singular and perpendicular; which I thought a rather clever and original sneer until I discovered that the impertinent person had got it out of a book.

It is as easy to be clever as rich if we help ourselves to other people's wealth; and if I do make a "profuse" use of the first person, singular and "perpendicular," it is about the only thing in the world I have the right to talk about as I wish and to tell whatever pleases me; and if I am accused of being conceited I can only reply that I am not without a certain pride in the fact that I never have hid behind anybody's coat-tail, whether the tail of that coat belonged to a policeman or to a friend; and I object to the statement that I am hard to "understand," for I am nothing of the kind.

There are very few people in the world against whom I have ever felt any personal anger, any more than I ever felt personal

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anger toward a snake or some such venomous and deadly thing as ought to have been put out of the way; and because I sometimes go to the trouble of interfering with such thing, and person, I have my motives suspected; for though a group of men will gallantly spend a half-day looking for a snake that has made a woman scream, they must be brothers, or fathers or husbands, or something of the kind, before they will go outside of law courts—which could scarcely have been better designed for the befuddlement of justice, and the advantage of clever criminals if clever criminals had themselves designed such courts—to get scoundrels into trouble.

Understand that I do not go around looking for scoundrels, or anything of the kind; but when one of them, or a dozen of them, meddles with me or with anybody in whom I happen to be interested, I have the time, patience and inclination to look into the matter and do some things that I feel ought to be done. So, having got those comments out of the way, I shall go on with the story.

THE few following days nothing worth being put down chronologically took place. Madame Guigane sent me several notes that had nothing of importance in them. She said she was keeping an eye on Sin Chang—which might mean anything. She said in every note that I ought to meet her and talk things over, which only disclosed the feminine instinct for gossip.

I got my photographs from the importantly youthful drug clerk and was very well satisfied with the result under the circumstances; though it would not have taken much to make the enlargement more like the person it resembled. But not being an artist I did not attempt to touch it up.

Regarding the papers I had stolen from Zoronna I had more difficulty. I spent some money and gave up a lot of time showing them to people who knew languages; and though I was quickly enough told the writing was in Russian I couldn't find a Russian who made head or tail of it.

But as the really important thing which I took from the trunk was the photograph, and as the papers never did amount to much, I will explain about them briefly and have it over with, so nobody will lose patience by watching out for them and be dissatisfied to see them scarcely worth having been mentioned. Zoronna, so I learned in time, wrote a diary in cipher; and as she used Russian the cipher was not translatable without more application and study than anybody gave it.

It must have been a rather emotional diary, full of moods and hopes and ambitions and longings, and such stuff, which—judging by the fuss educated people have made over the diary of a silly Russian girl by the name of Marie Bashkirtseff, or something of the kind—may make "great literature," but otherwise seems to be nonsense. So I jump ahead of the story's development to say that nothing important came from Zoronna's diary.

If I were writing her biography, or history, it would be different. I am not. I am describing only that angle made when her "destiny" crossed my own.

The newspapers had found out that she was Zoronna Symondi. I think it was the big mirror which first gave the clue. After suspicion, proof was easy. There were not two women alive like her.

The discovery had no bearing on affairs as they unfolded for me, but the newspapers grew highly excited. Cantello had been slain—so the police thought—by one of her lovers. She was a notorious and wicked woman. Perhaps the same lover had killed her, since no trace of her could be found.

Lord Bob was a much changed young man in many ways. He had numerous interviews with detectives, and succeeded in pretending that he had not known she was really Zoronna Symondi. He could get out of almost any difficulty where acting was of service.

Besides, there was not a suspicion that he was anything but a young society man, and there was no need to explain why a young society man would rapidly build up friendship with Zoronna, no matter under what name she masqueraded.

As I have said, he was a much changed young man, and sat about moodily for hours, sometimes starting up with nervous jerks. He went out sometimes, frequently—sneaked out the back way to evade reporters. He returned with little or nothing to say—to me anyway. And though about the house he always had a glass of iced liquor in his hand he never seemed to be made the least unsteady or otherwise much affected by it.

Then one day he called me to him. One

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afternoon. He was sitting very stiffly on the edge of a big padded armchair, and holding his tall glass firmly in both hands, and using both hands to steady the glass as he lifted it for an occasional sip. He was in need of something to keep his nerves from flying to pieces.

He began by saying that he was going to have it out with me, that he had no use for me, that he was suspicious of me, that he knew I had some reasons to be suspicious on my part, too, but that he thought things over and we had come to the parting of the ways.

I nodded appreciatively at his frankness.

He swore, and, perhaps referring to the fact that I had not shown excitement over his introductory and blunt remarks, said—"You're about as human as a totem-pole."

Then he almost emptied his glass at a gulp.

"What is the trouble? Maybe I can explain."

I said it not friendlily, but sarcastically.

He stared at me contemptuously, then did empty his glass, and reached to place it on the table. His hand trembled so that the bottom of the glass clicked rapidly against the table top.

Then he fumbled in the pocket of his coat, and, drawing out a letter of several pages, selected one and started to hand it to me. After some hesitation, however, he thrust out the complete letter.

"Zoronna," he said at the same time, "*did* take you to her room for a trap——"

I waited quietly while he paused to see how I would act.

"—but—she thought you'd kill Hurgronje."

I said nothing.

Then he tried to justify her. She was deadly afraid of Hurgronje, and she knew that he was just as afraid of me. By accident she had learned my identity. She had taken a desperate chance—and Hurgronje hadn't appeared.

I made no comment. He was not telling me anything new.

"You believe it, don't you?" he asked, obviously thinking that I did not believe it.

I assured him that I did believe it.

That surprized him. He stared at me for some moments, then shook the letter to call my attention to it.

"Read this," he said. "Read all of it. From her."

I told him that I did not care to read it, since he had shown a trace of hesitancy about having me do so; and I suggested that he merely tell me what was in it that he wished me to know.

"No, you read it."

I did. It had evidently been written for my eyes; that is, with the idea that it might be given me to read. The hesitancy on his part probably came from the words:

> Mr. Everherd won't want to trust me, I know. But he will surely trust you.

The letter said that Hurgronje, with the idea of terrifying his two negroes into telling him the truth about what had been done in Pittsburg, was going to pretend to raise me from the dead. It was a part of Hurgronje's method to keep some people around who actually believed in his "wizardry," as it contributed to their faithfulness and fears. Negroes are susceptible toward that sort of thing, but a king's ransom in jewels might have tempted them beyond their fears.

A dummy would be raised from the basement right through the floor. The dummy would come on a pedestal right into Hurgronje's presence. There would be—there always was—a body-guard of one or two persons in the room.

There was no other way that she could think of in which I would be surely admitted to Hurgronje's presence. The precautions that he took to secure himself were elaborate; they had become more elaborate of late.

I WAS surprized, even pleased, considerably relieved by the letter, particularly as I was sure that it had been designed for my eyes. So, nearly as I could tell, it told the truth. Cantello had mentioned the negroes and the proposal of frightening them.

The statement that there would be a body-guard about Hurgronje was explicit enough to make me exonerate Lord Bob and her from the idea of treachery. Had there been assurance of no body-guard, as I expected, I would have felt differently.

The letter explained that there would probably be but one man in the basement, the engineer. That she would somehow get me a duplicate key to the basement, with which I could enter, overpower the engineer, throw on the switch and take my place on the pedestal, which moved upward very slowly.

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That was just about like a woman's proposal; about as desperate and illogical as her previous attempt to bring me and Hurgronje together, and with far more chances of something going wrong. But, I knew, it showed that she was acting in good faith; treacherous intent would have discovered something more simple and more plausible.

The part about the key to the basement was what really appealed to me. With that advantage I felt sure I could find some more acceptable way of getting to Hurgronje.

"All right," I said to Lord Bob. "I'll try it."

He studied the burning end of his cigaret thoughtfully for some time.

"Say," he began, "do you know that she's deathly afraid of Hurgronje, but she went to him thinkin' that he was about all the protection she had from you?"

I was inclined to think there was some truth in that. She went, having that thought in mind; but she had gone, not because she thought that. She was going to him anyway. The death of Cantello had no doubt increased her readiness to go—with some story that "explained" Cantello's death to Hurgronje.

I said as much, and Lord Bob blinked several times without taking his eyes from me. He could not understand the unerring accuracy of my guesses.

"Well, that's got nothin' to do with it—now. All I'm tryin' to do is play square with you. An' remember what I said a while ago. You an' I are done—as friends. We've just got a common wish to see Hurgronje ki— put out o' the way. I might as well commit suicide if he isn't; an' you—it'll be about the same with you when he finds out."

I nodded.

"Well, I never asked any man to do something I ought 'o do myself. I'm not goin' to begin now. You'll plug Hurgronje all right—'cause you never miss. You c'd knock the fringe off a bald man's head without wakin' 'im—but they'd get you right then an' there.

"An' I'll be honest. Zoronna more than half hopes they do get you. She's afraid of you. So am I, in a way. I quit trustin' you long ago. We're bein' frank now."

I acknowledge that I was begining to observe as much.

I WOULD not undertake to say how much of what followed was, so to speak, gin and how much was Lord Bob.

"All I want," he said, "is one swipe at Hurgronje, an' I mean to have it. I'll never be able to look myself in the mirror if I sit back an' let you or anybody else do the job for me. You get a lot o' credit for bravery that you haven't got comin' to you."

I acknowledged as much with a nod. It would have taken a great deal more to put me out of patience with Lord Bob just then, for I had been much relieved and pleased to find him after all incapable of treachery.

"What I mean's this," he went on, just a trifle more friendlily, but only a trifle, though somewhat modifying his last statement. "You don't do things 'cause you're full of courage. You do 'em 'cause you just naturally don't get scared. The very idea of puttin' even a fellow like Hurgy out of the way just gives me the chills; you're too —— cold-blooded to have chills. But what I'm leadin' up to 's this: You turn this offer down—see?"

He rattled the letter, which I had returned to him.

"I'm sayin' you've turned it down anyway. Partly because it's a frame-up on you. B'sides, some way or other I'll get to Hurgy—an' take my own chance on gettin' out. I know the house. I got to go over there tomorrow night on a little special work. I'll go some other night on my own hook.

"I heard you right, didn't I? You turned this down—" he tapped the letter—"cold. You don't trust her."

"You would not even accept help from me?"

"Well," he said slowly, doubtfully, "I don't know."

I asked him to state in just so many words what was his grievance against me.

He started off impulsively enough:

"Why you—you—you—" then, weakening a little, "you've acted funny—I—I don't know what you're up to."

Pause. Then resolutely—

"I just don't trust you, that's all."

Then as if clinching the grievance:

"You *did* mean to do something to Zoronna. That's enough."

"Correct," I admitted. "I was suspicious of her."

"You're not now?" he asked dubiously.

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"No."

"Why?"

"Two reasons. One of them is that I am sure she has not told Hurgronje that I am alive and here."

"How do you know?" he demanded, perhaps unaware that he was rather taking the part of the devil's advocate.

"Hurgronje wouldn't be any more feverishly anxious to get his hands on me if I had his heart here—" I tapped my waist—"instead of his jewels. Neither he nor anybody connected with him has been prowling around. This apartment hasn't been searched. And I've taken little walks in dark places just to see if I was shadowed. So I am convinced that she has not told Hurgronje. But there is another and even more important reason for trusting her."

"What's that?"

He asked it with more curiosity than antagonism.

"I overheard her confession to you."

"You—you—you—" he cried loudly; then almost inaudibly added, "Never!"

In about three words, or possibly one or two more, I convinced him that I had been behind the curtains in Zoronna's room. He leaned weakly against the back of the chair and shut his eyes. He opened them to stare at me for a few moments, then shut them again and shook his head.

But he was denying what he did not doubt. The head-shake meant nothing except that it seemed impossible. He knew that it was true.

"And you knew all the time?" he asked in the tone of a man who has been almost crushed. "I'm a fool; I'm a fool; I'm a —— fool," he repeated rapidly, striking a fist against his palm and moving his head about as if in pain. "Sweet Heavens, man! An' you didn't let on? An' after I talked to you like that! How'd you get out? Don, I *am* a fool. I didn't trust you——"

We talked it all out and over.

"Luck," said Lord Bob, referring to the coincidences that had brought me to his apartment when I came from New York rather than to any one of a hundred other places where I might have gone.

But I am no believer in "luck." The threads of fatalism, of design, are too boldly and dramatically woven in life's fabric to be the result of mere chance.

"But Cantello," I said, getting to a question that had troubled me. "Why did that switchboard girl say he came in before you and Zoronna arrived?"

"The girl's out of Zoronna's troupe. Zoronna put her on the job 'cause Hurgronje always bribes the telephone girls to spy on her an' listen in. He's afraid she'll get in love with somebody an' not be worth anything to him after that.

"I'll settle with Hurgy myself. That goes, too. Remember it, Don—even if we are friends now.

"By Heavens, it was you that did get us out o' that mess after all! When we found the maids all tied up—an' heard 'em talk—well, Zoronna told the girl downstairs what to say; an' even Hurgronje b'lieves it. Doesn't he pay her on the side to give him inside dope? He's all mystified, but he don't doubt anybody—except Cantello. He thinks Cantello was probably up to something—sneakin' into Zoronna's apartment when she wasn't there. . . .

"Oh," he said wearily when I complimented him, "I know it's a clever story. But it kind o' makes me— I can't explain. I don't mind lyin', Don. I like to lie at times. But I feel sneaky about that."

I understood perfectly. Lord Bob had real honor in him, no matter how much there may have been of the disreputable. The more or less mocking title of "lord" that had been fastened on to him as an ironical tribute to his fastidious foppishness somehow was inadvertently appropriate to the honor and chivalry which was at one time supposed to distinguish, but never really did, the nobility, the knighthood, the lords of the land.

In the course of our conversation Lord Bob told me that Hurgronje had located himself on Belvedere Island; and that he was going over tomorrow night to get something—he didn't know just what—for Sin Chang.

"The way it is," Lord Bob explained, "Hurgronje's tryin' to get in on opium-smugglin'. It's gettin' to be a man-sized job to get the stuff in. Hurgronje's undertakin' to prove that he can get it in. He don't dream I'm the one that's bein' sent after it, though.

"I'd spoil his game by lettin' myself get caught if I thought for two minutes he could put anything over on Sin Chang. Take it from me, Don, it can't be done. B'sides, I've told Sin Chang all I know. . . . Yes, about my end of it, too. That's why I wanted to mention you to him. But I didn't.

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"Sin Chang'd be all right if it wasn't for his slave trade. But he's a Chinaman. I take his money. . . . What? . . . Forget it! Don't you eat in the same café that serves wife-beaters if said beaters pay the bill? Sin Chang's a friend to me.

"That ruby—the Red Moon? It's a beauty, but don't you ever believe Sin Chang is goin' to turn loose of it—not very far, anyway."

I did not venture to tell him my suspicion that Hurgronje had probably offered for the Red Moon a price that would tempt even Sin Chang. I did tell him that I had nothing of his faith in Chinamen.

"You never know what they are up to," I said.

He profanely remarked that I was a fine fellow indeed to reproach anybody for concealing what he knew or had in mind.

"But say, old man, if Sin Chang passes the word I'm takin' the *Sea Breeze* out tomorrow night. You willin' to turn smuggler?"

I was. The word came all right.

"Of course it's off if there's a fog—looks more like rain, though," Lord Bob said, pressing his nose against the window and stooping to get a squint at the dull sky.

IT WAS dark and cold, one of those leaden nights that chill the blood. "Seems to me," I remarked after Lord Bob, Jackman and I had crawled on board, "that you let too many people suspect your business."

I referred to the fact that we had taken one of those small tugs that ply across the water at all hours of the day and night like huge beetles, tossing and chugging, to come to the yacht anchorage; and, having arrived, an old caretaker in a sheepskin coat had met us at the gangway of a rather large yacht to which the tug was directed. He held up a lantern and glanced into the faces of Lord Bob and Jackman, but stared for a moment longer into mine.

The tug put off. The caretaker put us into a row boat and with slow strokes and creaking oarlocks pushed us over to the *Sea Breeze*. I could not have rested nights if there had been so many uncertain links in any enterprise of mine.

Lord Bob laughed:

The caretaker had gone off with his creaking oarlocks; and without lights Jackman and Lord Bob began dismantling the cruiser, unscrewing bolts and folding down the superstructure almost flush with the deck. A light mast was set up with gauze bunched around it to give the appearance of furled canvas—which is what now is known as "camouflage."

It took them over an hour to get the work done. I was surprized at the agility and tirelessness of the foppish Lord Bob, who, having changed into working-clothes, and though his shoulder must have been a little painful still, jumped about with a sort of one-handed alacrity that was astonishing. I gave a hand at lifting and dropping, but otherwise kept out of the way.

"All set, skipper?" Lord Bob asked cheerily.

Jackman came into the cockpit and with a torch—electric torch—examined the engine, from which he had removed the cover. He fumbled about with a kind of affectionate inquiry, doing those many things that a loving mechanic always does to his idol, and poked the snout of an oil-can into a hundred places before he pressed the button that, connected with a starting-battery, set the engine to chugging.

It was a good deal like a woman, that engine, and did not want to do what was expected of it; but presently was warmed up, and set into a muffled chugging with a highly rhythmic beat that was suggestive of power. The power was there, too.

"Come into the bow with me," said Lord Bob as Jackman drew up some heavy blankets, put one around Lord Bob and offered another to me. "I'm lookout," and he swung a case of night glasses to and fro.

We went into the bow. The wind was sharp. Lord Bob unscrewed the lid of his silver flask and passed it to me; but I pushed it back. I have nothing against liquor of any kind except this: To send it into my stomach to cheer up my blood is too much like calling for a policeman when somebody is trying to impose on me.

In a low voice through a short megaphone Lord Bob sent back a word from time to time to Jackman, and in order to go as slowly as he wished he often killed the engine and let her glide forward. It was almost impossible to go slow with that engine kicking at the water.

We made our way out of the yacht anchorage, and from the darkness came a muffled, hoarse voice as if from the clouds—

"Good luck, me boys."

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It was the old caretaker conferring his blessings from the quarterdeck rail of the big yacht where he seemed to make his headquarters.

Not a light showed on the *Sea Breeze*, though within the fold of his blanket Lord Bob occasionally gave a flash at the face of his watch. In the distance the lights of many cities sparkled, and an occasional ferry-boat, like some fairy craft far off, slipped along, festooned with rows of lights; and now and then we caught the red or green glimmer of some vessel at her anchorage.

"See," said Lord Bob, pointing backward. "There's where we'll all stop a while —if we get caught," and he laughed.

He had indicated Alcatraz Island, where the government has a Federal prison.

Later—

"There's where Hurgronje is—somewhere there."

He had pointed toward a small cluster of lights that seemed set in sheer ebony.

Lord Bob and Jackman steered easily enough by their knowledge of the lights; and the boat moved slowly, often silently, sometimes almost motionless except for the tossing of the small, sturdy little waves and whatever action the tide may have had.

Suddenly out of the pure darkness, perhaps a mile away, a stream of light shot and slowly swept along the surface of the water.

"Kill 'er," said Lord Bob; and the engine died.

We were out of range of the searchlight which some lurking police-boat had suddenly released in the hope of catching something by surprize.

"Other nights," said Lord Bob cheerfully, "one of 'em opened up not a hundred yards away. Awfully meddlesome, those water cops."

I asked more about them. He explained that, having taken a "shot" around and found nothing, they would—with all lights out—chug along a couple of miles to some other likely spot, kill the engine and lie still for a half-hour; then if nothing drifted along worth looking into they would sweep the water again.

"Been doin' that for a month. Experimentin', I guess. Darn fools; they ought to move about with sails. Might catch somebody."

It is easy to make fun of the police as long as one is not caught.

We waited until the chugging of the departing boat—she crossed our stern and for some moments we rather expected to have to make a dash—was very faint; then moved ahead again.

I AM not a man of the sea, but I have never grown weary yet with water under me, and the nearest that I ever approach to that dream idyllic state which poets seem to evoke at will is when darkness and water make an impalpable chorus of their incantations. But I have never written any poetry about it.

So I rather lost track of time and place and direction.

Lord Bob began more frequently to look at his watch, and spoke often to Jackman. Then came:

"All right, Jack. Let 'er go. We'll be late."

The boat started up; the speed grew, faster, faster until the *chug-chug-chug* became almost a steady noise, slightly accentuated; and the *Sea Breeze* seemed to spring forward and make straight for land.

A light flashed from the shore and went out; another flash appeared and was instantly extinguished, then two longer flashes.

At once our engine stopped.

Lord Bob swore. The fools, he said, had held the electric-torch straight above their heads to signal, instead of sheltering it more.

Straight for the shore we went, and, gliding ahead with Lord Bob's light gleaming low in the water, came alongside a landing from which steps ran into a house that bulked black right on the water's edge.

"Know where we are?" said Lord Bob.

"No."

"Belvedere."

Then he began swearing at the four dark shapes on the landing, one of whom had told him to wait.

"Wait ——! Why aren't you ready? Bang! Biff! Boom-aling! Think I am a barge or something? Wow! xadsrgadcxas! What a crew!" he exclaimed as more men appeared from the shadows, carrying something under which appeared to be very heavy.

"What the ——!" he demanded. "Think I'm an ocean liner—got a hold, or something?"

The big long package was placed on the

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landing, and some rough voice told him to lower it.

"Lower it yourselves. On the job, there," and Lord Bob's voice took on a surprizing menace.

But Jackman called—

"Look!"

In the distance a long, bobbing finger of light was scrawling short arcs on the water, and in the pause and silence we could hear the faint throb of a motor.

"Police," said Jackman, his voice untroubled.

"Down with it, or off we go," said Lord Bob, and the group of men—some jumping on to the boat—began lowering away the immense package, which seemed to weigh not less than three or four hundred pounds.

"Mother of Saint Solomon!" said Lord Bob, eyeing the box, which was some six feet long and two feet square, as it took up a big part of the deck-room. "Bet we dump this over 'fore the night's out. Back her out, Jack. We've got to go."

The engine kicked, and the landing began to recede.

"The water cops'll be on our trail all right," said Lord Bob cheerfully, watching the searchlight that was rapidly swinging about.

Then Jackman swore. The engine had died.

"I don't know of anything more feminine than a motor-boat," I commented.

"Boomerang is," said Lord Bob cheerfully. "And those —— cops carry mighty long-winded rifles."

"Gas was choked," said Jackman as the boat trembled from the vibration of the engine.

Then from somewhere up above us a voice spoke. We were on our way, and the engine's throbbing seemed almost deafening; but somehow that voice carried clear and penetrating:

"Well done. Well done, my men!"

Lord Bob clenched my shoulders as both of our faces were jerked upward in the darkness, trying to see who had spoken from the window; though we knew who it was.

"Hurgy!" whispered Lord Bob.

Pause.

"Great Saint Solomon!"

Pause.

"I wonder what we *have* got!"

I said nothing, but I was trying to think. We were storming through the water and—with a recklessness of which my cautious nature did not approve—cutting back almost at right angles with the police boat. But she was following sound only.

Not a light showed; and as Lord Bob explained, sound is hard to follow on the water. The police boat, made a little uncertain by the mingling of her own motor with that of the *Sea Breeze*, had to stop her engine from time to time and listen to be sure of the direction. But either by luck or because the ears of the policemen were cunning, she guessed right and changed course so that for a few minutes the searchlight intermittently played around us; and Lord Bob was right about the rifles.

But he and I had comfortable shelter behind the box, and Jackman bent low over his engine and poured in oil.

"Are you going to find out what's in this box?" I yelled right up against his ear.

"You guessed it!" he shouted back.

I felt a little better satisfied, but one needed to be very much the master of concentration to think of much beside the *zz-z-i-p-plung!* of rifle bullets that played about. The *Sea Breeze* darted this way and that, tearing through the water with a very nearly steady roar and creating a wind that struck us like a gale.

"Great, eh?" Lord Bob cried two inches from my ear.

I thought comment was needless. And it was not my idea of great sport, although as far as that particular police boat was concerned it was safe enough. The shooting was not good—nor was anybody likely to have made it good with an unsteady boat beneath him and another for a target—and we were gaining rapidly.

But it seemed to me that Lord Bob and Jackman were a pair of lunatics. They were heading straight down the bay for the city. The *Sea Breeze* carried no lights, and the danger of running into something when going at that clip was altogether too obvious.

She veered abruptly and headed straight for Alcatraz; went in a half-circle around the island and again cut off down the bay—and the police boat lost us for a time. We went by a ship and a voice bellowed at us, and Lord Bob through his megaphone shouted back something impudent that perhaps never reached the lookout's ears.

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FOR two or three reasons Lord Bob chose that route. The first was that he was to turn over his box to parties waiting for him clear at the south end of the city's water-front; another reason was, he said, it gave more room to maneuver in case some suspicious craft put off from shore or loomed up ahead.

He suggested that I try to locate a boat that carried no lights, to locate her purely by sound, particularly when she was traveling as fast as the *Sea Breeze;* and—his phrase—I would find it like trying to catch an "echo in a rain-barrel."

Behind us we could barely make out the faint lights of the pursuer. He explained that at that distance she couldn't hear our motor for her own, that she would have to stop from time to time and listen, and he promised that he would do some fancy curves before we had finished.

"Like a bull chasin' a jackrabbit," was his gleeful simile.

A ferry-boat, all lights, was scooting across the bay, and I would have appreciated one of those fancy curves that he spoke about, for it seemed that as we lay we could not miss her. We did; by—I guessed—about ten feet, but was assured that the real distance was several times as many. Distance, to my eyes, is deceptive on black water.

"Now," said Lord Bob, "let's have a look."

Veiling his flashlight, we examined the box; but there was not a lock on it.

"Must break 'er open," he said, and crawled back toward Jackman, who sat almost steadily pouring oil into the engine.

He returned with a hammer and chisel.

"Tell Sin the p'lice did it," he cried gaily, pushing the tools into my hands. "Give 'im a great story of how I got away. He's good old chink. B'lieve anything."

I struck into the tough wood, eager, yet a little afraid of finding what I expected. The wood was hard, and nailed solid.

"Great mother of Solomon," commented Lord Bob, "why didn't he call a transfer company? All this risk. Hurgy didn't use to be a fool."

A piece of the board reluctantly gave way to my prying. I thrust in a hand, feeling, and struck something cold and hard, metallic. It would be impossible to say whether my sensation was one of relief or disappointment.

Lord Bob asked what it was, but I could not say. He poked in the flashlight, but nothing was revealed except a small surface of bright yellow metal. I pried lose another board, and again the flashlight swept it.

Lord Bob stood as if dumfounded—

"Gold!"

He yelled it; then, taking the chisel, struck into the metal, and the part laid bare was, or seemed to be, the same.

"A statue of solid gold!" he cried.

Then:

"By Saint Solomon, I don't b'lieve it!"

It was some kind of a large image, and seemed to be made of yellow metal.

"F'r two cents I'd dump it over," he shouted.

Meaning that the first law of smuggling was to get rid of the evidence when in danger of being taken; and he could pretend to have been in that danger.

"Nothing contraband," I said, pointing at the statue.

We had to talk at the top of our lungs.

"Be sure there is—or I wouldn't been sent for it. . . . What's that?"

He fixed the glasses to his eyes and stared ahead to a twinkling green light on the water.

"Some Goat Island cutter," he guessed.

"The tower of jewels," he added, jesting and pointed toward the Ferry Building.

The water boiled behind us and a fine spray like mist up from the windward of the *Sea Breeze.* The motor struck with the rapidity of a sewing-machine.

"We can do better 'an thirty knots—in a pinch," Lord Bob shouted approvingly as he again turned and poked his light into the box.

Then, putting the megaphone almost deafeningly against my ear, he yelled:

"A ton o' fake gold for a phony ruby—that's my guess. Knowin' Hurgy an' Sin too! . . . Mother of —— What the ——!"

A searchlight, dead ahead, and not a hundred yards ahead at that, struck the water near us, and almost at once shifted so as to cover us with a stream of light. Three points to starboard, and slightly farther away, another light cut through the darkness and fumbled for a moment before it intersected the other right across our small deck. A voice bellowed:

"A-hoy there. Lay to!"

Either because our own motor had smothered all sound of other motors, or

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because the police boats by good luck had happened to be lying right in our course, we were suddenly caught in a tight place. If we turned, the lost motion of turning would give the pursuers a chance to crowd in closer, for a motor-boat can not turn on its heels like an alarmed animal; and the police had the advantage of position; but if in a comparatively straight line we could go by them, the positions would be nearly reversed, and they would lose the time in veering around. It was all a matter of not many seconds perhaps, but just at that moment seconds were important. It looked to me suspiciously as if the police had either known, or had a pretty good idea as to what they were doing.

Things happened with a rapidity that necessarily makes the telling of it slow; and Lord Bob and Jackman evidently understood, either by studious prearrangement or by instinct, each other so well, that they knew what to do. For Lord Bob sang out:

"Don't shoot. We'll stop."

Then:

"Kill that engine—kill 'er. The jig's up."

And again—

"Don't shoot—we're stoppin'."

We could see nothing, for the light was blinding. But we could hear, faintly and muffled, but enough to tell what the police thought. For the *Sea Breeze* stuck right in the path of the nearest light as if she were coming alongside to surrender, then veered slightly to port, the motor gathered an unsuspected burst of speed, and we went past the policeman near enough to have tossed a dollar on board. Lord Bob and I leaped over the box and went flat to the deck, not an instant before the rifles began to crack.

"All right, Jack?" Lord Bob called.

"Sure am," came the answer against the wind.

We could see two searchlights frantically waving about like the bright antennæ of some monstrous and excited insect; and they were left far behind before they had picked up their speed; and we could easily outdistance them in their highest speed anyhow. So the situation was again reversed; the policemen could not locate us unless they stopped from time to time to listen for our motor. Or at least so we thought.

"This is where we make a break for it," said Lord Bob after twenty minutes of fast speed, and all the time he had been closely scanning the dark waterline of the city, no doubt picking out landmarks indistinguishable to me.

"Got it, Jack? It's three blocks below the Jennings wharf—where that double green light— You've picked it up? Good! Let's go in."

To me:

"We've got a good five minutes' jump on 'em. Work on narrow margins in this business. Great life, Don?"

I did not think so, but it seemed no time to talk about it.

I asked only if there were not any watchmen along here. The watchmen, he said, had been taken care of. It was the way they made their living—"by being taken care of."

"Too many links," was my comment.

But since the importation of smoking opium was absolutely prohibited, and since people had to have it—or thought they did, which as far as their efforts to get it are concerned amounts to the same thing—elaborate preparations would be made for smuggling, and certain risks readily accepted. But there was no opium in the box we had.

WE GLIDED in with a dead engine toward the darkened wharves, standing with long legs deep in the water, with a background of solidly black sheds and warehouses—a fine place for the ghosts of murdered men. A street light here and there forlornly gleamed, and an occasional wharf light dimly burned against the all-encroaching night. Lord Bob stood in the bow with his flashlight burning, and I held a boat-hook to steady us as we ran beside a low, flat-topped barge.

We stopped.

"Hey," Lord Bob shouted inquiringly into the darkness.

"Hands up," came the hoarse order. "We're p'lice."

Three forms suddenly appeared, bulking blackly, on the edge of the barge.

"The —— you are," said Lord Bob. "We're customs. This is the boat an' stuff. P'lice boats are layin' out to catch the other fellow."

"What other feller?" demanded the officer in charge, a little impressed, but wholly suspicious.

Flashlights had fallen on us. We did not look at all like what the police imagine all

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smugglers must look, for we were not rough and unshaven, though Lord Bob and Jackman were dressed roughly.

"Douse those lights or you'll kill the game," said Lord Bob, wholly ignoring the revolvers, which I confess, had engaged my attention. "I've been living with the smugglers. It was *I* tipped *you* fellows off. There's another boat due here tonight.

"Badge? Badge be ——! Of course—" very ironically—"I've worn a badge for the last month with chinks goin' through my pockets ever' time I went to sleep. Douse those lights an' give us a lift with this stuff."

It was a good bluff, particularly that sentence about it being Lord Bob himself who had tipped the police off. Now somebody *had* tipped the police off. That was too obvious. And the chances were that no one of the three officers there on watch would know who had done it; so Lord Bob claimed the credit.

Also rather cleverly he had evaded the demand for credentials. Perhaps he had not succeeded in convincing the police that his story was true, but he did succeed in creating a doubt; and his next burst of words was the most effective of all.

"A nice laugh you fellows'll have on yourselves if you capture us three Federal agents—and let the crew of chinks escape. Couldn't transfer this ton of junk at sea, so we brought her in on the smugglers' boat. Give us a hand."

Rather warily, but trying not to appear too suspicious—for a policeman hates to be laughed at for having arrested the wrong party—they did give us a hand with that box.

"Gosh, what's in it?" demanded one deep-voiced fellow.

"Gold," said Lord Bob carelessly.

Several comments from the police on that. Somehow or other it rather tickled their fancy. Perhaps too, subconsciously they figured that if Lord Bob had been a smuggler he would not so readily have admitted that the box was weighted with gold.

"Come on now, let's get it up on the wharf—out of the way," said Lord Bob, taking control of the party with a sort of careless authority that is never easily resisted.

And on to the wharf we went, all heaving except Lord Bob, who had taken charge.

"I wonder," he said, "how they expected to get this thing off?"

"Ho," volunteered a policeman, "there's a two-ton truck about a block back."

"There was three men on it," another added quickly. "We nailed 'em. They're over there—handcuffed. Waitin'."

He laughed.

Our attention was attracted almost at the same time by the hurried *chug-chug-chug-chug-chug* out on the bay, and we turned to see two boats with searchlights sweeping ahead making for the wharf.

Quick as a flash Lord Bob said—

"They're closin' in on that other fellow."

And he gave me a significant tap on the shoulder, and next instant he had cracked a policeman over the head, knocking him cold. At the same time Jackman threw a garroting hold about the neck of another, and I presented an automatic so close to the face of the third that there could be no misunderstanding.

"Easy," said Lord Bob as he swooped to the unconscious policeman and stripped him of his weapon. Then:

"Now you two fellows give us a hand with this box to the truck. Lively!"

And he plucked their guns.

The box was carried to the truck and heaved up.

He told Jackman to go bid good-by to the *Sea Breeze*, and that sturdy fellow started back along the wharf at a gallop, while Lord Bob, having found one set of handcuffs, proceeded to fasten it to the left hand of each of the policemen. Had it been fastened to the left and right, the policemen could have run about easily, but as it was any sudden effort or speed was made rather awkward.

"How d'you like this game?" said Lord Bob cheerfully, poking me with a finger. "Great life, eh?"

"Won't they catch him?" I asked, motioning in the direction Jackman had gone.

"Not in a thousand years—look!"

I was already looking. A burst of light and an explosion had shot from the water's edge. And a moment later Jackman, on the run, came up and leaped to the driver's seat. Off we went.

"You see," Lord Bob explained gaily as we rattled and bounced along the street, bumpy and full of ruts from much heavy hauling, "they've got something more to think of than smugglers—an' there isn't a phone handy."

"But the men they've caught?"

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"Won't say a word. You don't talk when you work for Sin Chang."

"Somebody evidently *did* say a word," I corrected.

"True," he replied thoughtfully. "The first boat we met was a pure fluke. There's always one up there. But the other fellows were watchin'—and those on the barge. Oh, well, I should care. I was gettin' ready to duck from San Francisco anyway."

I did not say anything, but I was thinking that after I had paid a visit to Belvedere I too would just as soon move to some other city.

Later I asked what he intended to do with the box, and was satisfied with the reply that he was going to examine it carefully before he delivered it.

"C'rious, you know. Always like to see what old Hurgy's up to. B'sides the police *did* capture it an' I did get it away from 'em. I like to be truthful—even with a chink."

WE DREW to one side of the street and stopped for a moment as a fire-engine came thundering with clanging bell and hoofs and sparks streaming, on a furious dash to the waterfront fire. Jackman had blown up the *Sea Breeze* and scattered the flaming gasoline—one storage tank full too.

The fire, however, proved to be more spectacular, alarming, than dangerous. We met so many fire-engines and hose-carts that at last we turned up on to another street, and, taking a speed less likely to attract attention, made our way clear up into the city and across Market Street.

I doubt whether we could have gone a mile without being stopped had it not been for the fire. The police on the wharf would have got to a telephone and would have stirred up headquarters, and headquarters would have done everything possible to notify every officer on beat to keep an eye out for a truck and men of our description—and perhaps been given the number of the truck, though police when they think they have the upper hand are inclined to be careless.

But whoever wants to distract the attention of police need only start a fire on the waterfront; terror of such fire is so drilled into them that even smugglers assume second place for the time being.

Lord Bob was amazingly quick-witted, and also he had planned well. Nothing was left to connect him with the smuggling work. The *Sea Breeze* was destroyed beyond all chance of identification, and except for an accidental meeting with some one of the three policemen there was scarcely a possibility of his being troubled.

Later it was found out that the man who had tipped off the police was a stool pigeon, trying to get himself in solidly with the "cops." He had got himself taken along with the truck, and was one of the three men captured by the police. He, of course, had known nothing excepting that the boat was to come from the "north" and the wharf at which it was to stop; he had given his information to a police captain—one of the men who had gone out in the boats. And he soon was impatient to use his "pull" to get out of jail—then his body was found without a mark on it in a Barbary Coast alley.

We drove into an all-night garage. Jackman had pretended to discover something wrong with the engine, and while he and a mechanic worked on that Lord Bob—with many plausible comments for the benefit of the garage mechanic—and I carefully inspected the contents of the box.

The statue was not so large as the box, but needed as much room as the box gave it because of the position of the arms, which had the elbows sticking out as well as wide draperies, cast in the shape of flowing robes; and also there was some kind of ornamental headgear that gave it a length. What the thing was, or was intended to represent, I do not know.

Lord Bob soon found out that it wasn't gold, but had been "washed"—as he called it—with gold; and that it was made of brass. It seemed to be solid. The weight was the weight of solid metal, and the blows we struck gave no hollow sound.

Without saying anything to him as to what I was looking for, I examined it carefully clear around the body for anything that could be a seam. That is, remembering what my pickpocket had seen happen in Hurgronje's room, I made myself assured that nothing of the kind could be done with this statute, and I actually—even at the risk of offending the eyes of Sin Chang—scratched it with the point of a knife from shoulder to shoulder, both back and front, so as to be sure to uncover any crack. We did not take it from the box, but turned it over and over.

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"What on earth?" Lord Bob had demanded when he had stared uncomprehendingly at my close examination.

"Just curious," I told him.

"I'm curious too; but scratchin' it up isn't goin' to help. At least, not my curiosity. I got a jar when I thought it was gold.

"What the —— do you suppose is up? It isn't a Chinese idol—never a joss like that. I know 'em all. Saved heathens from prayin' to 'em, you know."

Jackman had decided that the engine trouble was at last fixed, and we drove away, and turned and twisted until we reached a short, dark street, where there was not a person in sight and not a light within half a block. Two-story walls rose on each side, solidly black.

The truck stopped, and Lord Bob jumped off, fumbled about a moment without use of his flashlight, then waited. What he had done was to locate the knot of a piece of string that ran through the building and back into its interior. Attached to the other end of the string were some Chinese chimes, and when he yanked the knotted end the chimes sounded. The police could have broken into every door and through every wall for a half block and found them empty—and the rooms next to those too; and largely because in breaking through they would have accidentally disturbed the sensitive fish-line and set the chimes to jangling warningly.

Lord Bob, however, had known how to give the cord a certain number of jerks at precisely the reassuring intervals; and presently the door opened from an unlighted passage, and a half-dozen quiet shadows filed out. But few words were exchanged. They pulled the box off and passed inside. The door closed. We drove the truck about two blocks, jumped off and left it; then made our way homeward.

"NOW what the —— will I say," Lord Bob asked carelessly, sinking almost out of sight in his favorite chair with a steaming glass of hot whisky in his hand "—what the —— will I say if any of those cops ever spot me? I know. I'll tell him that was my black-sheep brother. He's a bad one, that brother o' mine.

"An' how do you like bein' a smuggler, Don? It's the life, eh? Two cents I can guess what you're thinkin' of? Hurgy. Pay up. Personally I'm goin' on a polar expedition or somethin'."

Jackman, who from the time I had cracked him on the head by suddenly opening the door until that very quarter of an hour, had treated me with a sort of aloofness, seemed at last to have decided that I should be fully pardoned and had given me a cup of boiling tea. I stood at the window, peering past the curtains at the dull grayness of the coming dawn and stirred the tea.

It was of Hurgronje that I was thinking. I let Lord Bob talk. He had amazing energy, that boy. Even I was just a little weary, and I seldom feel tired, rarely feel the need of sleep, however little of it I may get.

I would have preferred quiet, but it was not to be had while Lord Bob was around. He was as gleeful as a boy who has successfully robbed a miserly farmer of a hatful of apples.

The telephone rang. It was a queer time for a telephone to be ringing. We looked at each other. Jackman came in to answer it.

"Tell 'em I'm in bed. If it's the police, tell 'em I've been in bed since eight o'clock last night, an' can't be disturbed." He laughed boyishly.

"For you, sir?" said Jackman, with a hand discreetly to the mouthpiece as he glanced at me.

"For me?"

"Yes, sir. A lady and——"

"Go on."

"And she is— Will you talk with her?"

"She is what?"

"Rather—er—insistent, sir, and——"

"And——"

"Will you talk with her, sir?"

I took the phone. In an instant I knew that what Jackman had hesitated to say was that the lady was "excited." She was. It was Madame Guigane.

"Don? Don! They've just brought that girl in—to Sin Chang's—brought her in a big yellow statue—not an hour ago. What shall I do? Can you imagine? Don, for ——'s sake say something! What shall we do? She's half dead—unconscious. *Say* something!"

What I said I do not know. All I can remember is hanging up the receiver and turning toward Lord Bob.

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CHAPTER VII

BY NOON the next day I had not stirred from the apartment, scarcely from the chair I had taken beside the telephone when the message came from Madame Guigane. I was waiting; for what, it would not be easy to say. Perhaps because Lord Bob had said, "Wait," and, getting into clothes in keeping with his character, had hurried off with Jackman. They were going to show that Chinaman that he had made a grave mistake in concluding any such bargain as brought Zoronna into his yellow fingers.

I had suggested that it might be well if I went along, but Lord Bob was impatient. He and Jackman could go right to Sin Chang. Sin Chang would not dare refuse them. He did not know of Lord Bob's love for her. It was all very plausible—but unconvincingly diplomatic. Anything that has diplomacy in it is a Chinaman's own game.

I fancied that Lord Bob meant to argue, perhaps declaim, a little angrily no doubt. The unknown quantity was, of course, how close the secret relations were between himself and the Chinaman.

I waited. Lord Bob did not come back. He did not telephone. There was no message. I wished for one. I wished all the success in the world to Lord Bob, for I did not care to be drawn into an affair with the Chinese, as my thoughts gravitated continually toward some one else. Hurgronje.

Lord Bob had undoubted courage and amazing resourcefulness. But he had a very bad weakness. He never carried a loaded gun.

At noon I called up Madame Guigane. She said a lot of things that are not worth repeating, but told me there was no new development. Zoronna, still ill and weak, was in the women's apartment of Sin Chang's house; and the Chinese women were giving her every attention—for she was the new bough of blossoms that was to decorate the doorway of their master.

Madame Guigane said it fiercely. She herself often covered the debauchery of opium with soothing, poetical phrases; but she was contemptuous of the Chinese imagery.

No, she had heard nothing of any disturbance in Sin Chang's household. No white men had been in there that she knew of. She was spending a lot of money so her "boys" could get stories of what was going on there. What was I going to do?

I did not know. I waited. I dozed a little, and, even dozing, thought. Then I splashed about in hot water for a while, dressed with some care, packed up whatever I thought might be well to take off with me, and sent the suit-case to the station. It was expressed to a "Mr. Richards," address, New York.

As it grew later in the afternoon I took the liberty of going through Lord Bob's personal effects. All the papers and letters I did into a package without glancing at them. His trinkets and jewelry I also did up. I put them into a suit-case and had them taken to a hotel.

By the time it was dark I had engaged a launch, and paid for it. It was to stand by all night, and be ready. Everything seemed to be done that I could do by way of preparation.

In the mean time I had heard nothing except from Madame Guigane; and she had nothing to tell.

It may appear strange that I was not more uneasy, and did not move more readily, about Lord Bob. But I was familiar enough with Chinamen's methods to know that he and Jackman were either dead within a few minutes after they had entered Sin Chang's house or else were prisoners—and being prisoners they ran no risk from hasty punishment, if punishment was intended.

Besides, a Chinaman hesitates to put a white man to death. I say "hesitates." I mean nothing more than that. In a fight or cornered, he will kill a white man as soon as he will kill a yellow woman.

Knowing how resourceful Lord Bob was, I waited hour on hour, hoping that he might pop up with some cheerful account of what had happened.

There was the police, of course. They should—theoretically—have been notified then, as well as previously in New York. But there would have been forty thousand things to explain, and their suspicions that maybe I was using them in a personal quarrel, or hoodwinking them, would have been unsatisfactory. Besides, the police go through doors with axes, and find nothing.

When it was dark I went on my way. It was a misty, drizzling night.

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I SUPPOSE it was the same Chinaman on guard at Madame Guigane with whom I had had a previous meeting; anyway he let me in at once. Most Chinamen look alike to me, and in the dimness of a faintly lighted passageway I can not undertake to distinguish one from another.

Madame Guigane was into the hall almost as soon as I, and, impatiently taking hold of my arm, showed me into one of her narrow, tiny, bizarre rooms, aflame with brilliant colors, billowy with pillows, and unventilated as a powder magazine. The only furniture in it was a chair, a low divan hidden by pillows in vivid colors, a low teak table on which rested an oblong silver tray with an alcohol lamp, needle, knives, scissors, sponge—the implements of poppy dozing.

I looked from them accusingly at her. She bared her lips so as to show her teeth, which were clean and white—and offered in evidence to prove that she did not smoke enough to discolor them.

Womanlike, she asked many questions and repeated two or three—at some points four and five—times all that she had to tell. And this was nothing more than she had with brevity told me two or three times over the telephone.

She had heard nothing of Lord Bob, whom she knew personally, or of Jackman. The girl was still in the women's quarters, where she was attentively cared for. She had been brought—from where, how or why, Madame Guigane did not know; but she had been brought in a large, queer-looking yellow statue that fitted together like a pill box.

The top slipped over the bottom—so of course there were no hinges. Had I drawn the edge of my knife lengthwise instead of around the body I would without doubt have discovered how the statue was fitted together. The box, a heavy one, had some bullets in it, and the statue several dents and gashes—so Madame Guigane had been told.

I said that I thought the police had tried to intercept the box, and answered some other questions without telling very much. Somehow she seemed not to understand why I showed at once such interest in the girl, yet had used such delay as to waste part of a night and a whole day; but the explanation that Lord Bob was hopelessly in love with her seemed to satisfy Madame Guigane.

"You trust your boys?" I asked.

"I do not. A Chinaman is just an ordinary mortal. Lies an' steals."

"You have nobody you can send along to show me the way into Sin Chang's?"

"Into Sin Chang's—you. I guess not, hardly. It's easy enough to get in. But out—

"Don't be silly, Don. You're not going into Sin Chang's. It's honeycombed with halls and doors. A mouse 'd get lost.

"The thing to do, Don, is to call the police. They'll raise —— for a white girl—if they know she has white friends on the outside."

"Otherwise?"

"Oh, I guess they would anyway."

"But you know they wouldn't find her."

"They might. But *you're* not going in there. Understand?"

I nodded understandingly.

Sin Chang's was about three blocks away. His household, together with such shops, storage, and lodging-places as he had about him for the better running—and concealing—of his business, she said, took up about a half of a block; by which I must not understand that his control, or friends, were limited to that half of a block. There were a dozen ways of getting into his rooms, and a hundred of getting out—or, she added, of not getting out.

"You've been in—and out."

Yes. She had been in, many times. Where else was one to get opium? She doubted if five per cent. of the opium used on the Pacific coast got into the country without having passed through Sin Chang's hands. She had to keep him in a good humor, make him presents, smoke with him once in a while—Sin Chang was easily flattered.

"But not insulted," I suggested, reminding her of certain remarks she had made to him once upon a time when he suggested something of the nature of "marriage."

She flushed, and said—

"You are a mean, cold-hearted beast."

Then slowly, but not angrily:

"There are times when I hate you more than I ever hated anything in my life. An' I have hated some people, too. . . . What'll you give me if I get that girl out?"

"She's wealthy. Maybe she'll pay whatever you want."

For some incomprehensible reason that

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made her furious. She jumped off the divan as if she were about to claw me.

"I don't want her money. I don't want yours. You're an idiot—an idiot—a —— idiot!"

And in spite of her very evident efforts to keep them back tears ran out of her eyes, and she threw herself face down among the pillows.

I did not know what to say or what to do, so I said nothing and sat still, and meditated on the character feminine. In a few seconds I had further material for reflection. She sprang up, her eyes tearless and bright, but her cheeks were stained. She was angry. She said she hated me, and that she was going to make me hate her, loathe her.

"I'm a hag!" she screamed. "I'm a terrible old hag! I'll show you!"

She jerked at her large earrings and flung them madly against the wall. Then she tore off the high, black collar about her neck, and her clawing hands went to her great mass of yellow hair.

But I turned my face. I got up. I went out of the door and shut it. I did not want to see how unattractive she could make herself, though for some perverse reasons that was what she was bent on disclosing.

I don't understand women. She had spent a thousand and more dollars on that yellow wig to make her startlingly beautiful and was tearing it off to show—to show what? I don't know. She screamed at me until the door closed; then, listening, I could hear her sobbing.

Very quietly I went down the hall and left the place.

I WENT into the tea-shop of Sam Wong. A little, dried Chinaman in blue blouse and black trousers with large glasses and a snake-like queue—Young China had not yet begun clipping pigtails—sat behind a counter and eyed me with the scrutinizing humbleness of a tradesman.

"Dlinkee tea?"

He motioned invitingly toward the back room, from which a low voice or two came buzzing.

"No. Look here. See this?"

I thrust out my fist and opened it, palm up. An unset diamond lay in it, a brilliant and beautiful stone.

He stared at it, then at me, then again at the diamond; and shook his head.

"Me no bly 'em," he said.

"It isn't for sale. Look."

I put out the other hand. In it were three little deep-red rubies.

He shook his head. He did not understand what was up, but with ready caution he was denying all complicity.

"Sin Chang wants to see me. Take the diamond. Tell him of the rubies. They too are his. I come unexpected, but on business that can not wait. See, these also are his—a gift."

I had brought my hand from a pocket and fairly dazzled the little, watchful, pig-like eyes.

He "no savee-ed" and squealed, and jabbered, and mixed up so much Chinese that I knew very well he, by squealing, had called some listener, and by babbling Chinese was instructing him; though I saw nothing and pretended to notice nothing. He denied knowing anything about Sin Chang. Declared he had never heard the name.

Just as a little minor bluff I remarked that it was very well; that when I reached Sin Chang I would say that Sam Wong did not know of him, and left me out in a muddy, wet street with gifts from the Golden Dragon for Sin Chang—and I started out. Sam Wong would not let me go. He asked questions, and a sudden understanding seemed to come over him. Oh, yes, he would find out.

What the "Golden Dragon" was, or might be, I did not know. One hifalutin name is about as good as another. Sam Wong could not be expected to know the orders, friendships and such of the great Sin Chang.

He asked for the diamond, saying that I should wait. And he went out.

I waited a long time. So long in fact that I began to wonder whether or not I would see my diamond or Sam Wong again. But I fancy the delay was because I had that nest of Chinamen puzzled, and that more than one slipped stealthily along the passageway to take a look through some hidden peep-hole at me. I was thinking of what one of my cynical crook friends once said—

"There are times when you can fool the devil—but not if his Chinese assistant is sitting alongside of him."

I wondered if I would succeed in fooling even the assistant himself. Madame Guigane had given me the idea when she spoke of gifts and flattery.

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Apparently I did succeed, for Sam Wong returned with a slim Chinaman in a much richer blouse and trousers, with embroidered slippers, heavily soled—a rather aristocratic-looking Chinaman.

"Lou go with 'im," said Sam Wong.

I nodded, and followed the guide out of the tea-shop.

We pushed through the heavy bead curtains and passed along a narrow back room where three or four tables with bare tops and some dishes on them—sugar-bowls, I suppose, and such—clustered as if huddling together in the center. A girl, rather shabby, and a man were at one of them. They glanced idly at us.

We went through a little door and stepped into a passage faintly lighted by an oil lamp here and there. I noticed that we passed many doors, and presently we entered one of these, came into a bare room, walked through it, went down a few steps and moved along a moldy passage, turned several times, again entered a room, very dismal-looking places with what appeared to be bunks along the wall. My guide did not at any time look back, but in opening a door he paused until I had put my hand against it to hold it open.

Out of the dungeon-like room we went and descended ten or twelve steep steps, and in this passage I found only candles burning—a candle every fifteen or twenty feet. I heard later that if the police attempted a raid some Chinaman ran along wherever candles were burning and with a fan-like implement hastily extinguished them—a piece of Oriental cunning that did not impress me very much, except that it was typically Oriental; that is, very subtle, rather complicated, and quite childish. The police, of course, would not care a continental how many candles were extinguished as they would have searchlights—and axes.

For fifteen or twenty minutes I followed that Chinaman up and down, and all around. I soon knew that he was trying to befuddle my sense of direction; and he did it, and I did not care in the least, for I had judgment enough to know that if I had to come back unguided I would not try to retrace my steps.

However, I also saw that it would have been hopeless for any one to try to reach Sin Chang without a guide. There were doors on every hand, and winding halls and passages; great rooms; dimly lighted, cellar-like rooms wherein one would perhaps have raced around like a rat in a tub without finding a door, for frequently it seemed to me that the Chinaman had approached a solid wall. Hurgronje, I guessed, for all of his mechanics, had nothing more deceptive.

All that meandering did not impress me. It irritated me. I was not a six-year-old child to be afraid of the dark, to fancy terrors at every hand, to be amazed by being walked in a zigzag circle, up and down stairs.

I was not even cautious. For two reasons: The important one being, I reasoned, that Sin Chang, being a human creature, could not be without curiosity enough to want to find out what I had to say since I had made so beautiful a gift and in a way promised finer things. The other reason was that if the Chinamen had intended to do anything rash they would have done it almost at once and not waited until I would—or the average person would—have become suspicious from so much wandering around through dark places.

AT LAST we came up out of a cellar through a trap door, and crawled into a rather ornate room with thick carpets on the polished floor, bronze bowls with dragons crawling on them, flowered screens, and such gaudy trumpery as the Chinaman piles around him under the notion that he is surrounding himself with luxury and beauty.

"Lou wait. I come lite back," said my guide, and off he went.

I sat down promptly, and waited.

He did not come back. A rather large Chinaman with lots of dignity and an evil face slowly opened a door and very deliberately came into the room. He did not take his black eyes off me. No doubt he was used to frightening people. He was decked out like a functionary in a Chinese opera (written in Italian, staged by Jewish capital).

"What do you want?" he said slowly in quite perfect English, and with a sort of cold menace no doubt intended to make me shiver clear down to my ankle bones.

I got up, and, I believe, quite as calmly and coolly asked—

"Who are you?"

He inhaled deeply and swelled visibly. His dignity was a rather important part of him.

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"I repeat, sir," he said slowly, perhaps impressively, "what do you want?"

I remarked that I had explained that a sufficient number of times to various other servants that evening, and suggested that it was not likely that I would have been brought so far into the house without some authority from Sin Chang.

"I," he said slowly, "am Sin Chang——"

He held it on a rising accent for a moment. It was quite cleverly done. But seeing that I knew better he put a possessive on to Chang, and added—

"—Chang's representative."

A very subtle gentleman, up to cunning tricks, and quite Americanized. A big Chinaman, too. I remembered that somebody had told me the big Chinamen were Cantonese and Manchus. But it made no difference. I did not care where he was from. "I have a message and gifts for Sin Chang," implying that they were were not for his representative.

It may seem that I was not diplomatic, or scarcely polite. I was not. Had I been there would have been no reason for not giving the alleged message—and the alleged gifts—to him. Also I was quite sure that he was not looking for trouble until he had found out what I did want.

He rewarded me with a steady, evil stare and some moments of silence. I accepted it all without visible anxiety. Two automatics were in my side pockets and four filled clips also. I was rather heavily weighted, in fact; and since, more or less, I had come expecting trouble I saw no reason for being timid when a large, strange Chinaman chose to be rather offended because his personality was not impressive enough to satisfy his vanity.

He withdrew slowly, almost motionlessly, maintaining his stare, and no doubt expecting me every moment to call that I would tell him whatever he wanted to know; for by withdrawing in silence he gave the impression that nothing more would be done for me, that I had had my chance and lost it. Very apparent it was that he and I would have some difficulty in being friends.

Again I waited, but not long.

A sweet and gentle apparition appeared noiselessly, and through another door. Her smile was bewitchingly pleasant, disarming in fact—only I never am disarmed in the presence of a woman. Something perhaps my Chinese host did not know.

It is nonsense about the Chinese having all the wisdom in their heads, ancient lore and a terrible understanding of human nature, and such fictional tradition. They are no more dangerous than anybody else who doesn't hesitate to kill and has patience, and uses a lot of tricks.

Little Miss Plum-Blossom, or whatever her name, was a small, dainty little maiden, highly painted, with her black hair drawn tightly back and the head decorated with ornate pins and fresh flowers. The almond eyes were accentuated by the lines of her blackened eyebrows.

Her feet were the smallest things that ever upheld a woman, or that I had ever seen under a woman. Hers were the first bound feet I had ever seen, and gave her a sort of graceful awkwardness—if there can be such a thing; and there was in her case—for she moved with ease, taking little, tiny steps, and almost fluttering.

She had on a sort of long blouse, with wide sleeves, of yellow and purple satin, which was richly embroidered. Her trousers were of purple, and she wore ankle bangles. Her fingers were covered with rings. She was the sort of little thing that a butterfly collector might net and put under glass.

Her voice was sweet, thin, tinkling—but when one considers that that girl had been taken when she was five or six years old, herded in with other girls of the same age or thereabouts, and from that almost babyhood trained in nothing else than to please males, instructed in all the graces and arts that would sooth and bewitch them, one may have more sympathy and less admiration for her. A friend who knows more about China than I ever want to know, but who may have the traveler's weakness for telling what isn't so, says that girls are often taken as young as three years.

Anyway her voice was sweet, thin, tinkling, and she could not speak English very well; but she spoke it charmingly, which is more than most women do who are born with English, that is also to say American, tongues in their mouths. I have no reason to feel that I can phonetically convey her curious pronunciation, but I may suggest it a little.

"Lou come see Sin Chang?"

Her little eyebrows were arched inquiringly.

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"Mos' honolable gentleman will come wi' me?"

The "most honorable gentleman" would. If I had conferred longevity and perpetual youth upon her she could not have appeared more pleased.

With that fluttering little walk of hers she came closer, bowing low and saying sweetly things I did not quite understand; then retreated, still facing me, toward the door, inviting me to pass through. I did. She closed the door and led the way, getting along nimbly down the rather wide and lighted hall, carpeted and ornamented with great bronze and porcelain vases. The air was heavy with incense. I heard faintly the soft whine of a fiddle and flutes, and once caught the muffled laughter of women's voices.

From time to time she looked at me coquettishly—not coquettishly in the crude sense, but conveying all that it would have done in the crude sense, yet with such a fleeting smile and modest quivering of downcast eyelashes that a man could hardly help being complimented and a bit excited maybe if he at all cared for compliments of the kind and was given to excitement in the presence of women.

That was all very well; but when her hand touched mine, and though she drew it away quickly with a kind of confusion that women think enhances their seductiveness—but did not pretend that it was really an accident—then, I say, I looked with an altogether different eye upon Miss Plum-Blossom. About the last thing in the world that a Chinese girl would do would be to offer herself in flirtation to a stranger in the house of her lord—unless instructed to do so. I felt something not combining sympathy with admiration for her.

There are—or if there are not there should be, because the poets need such a botanical fact in their work—beautiful flowers which are deadly of perfume. I put most women into that floral classification; and that little exotic Chinese bloom was instantly pigeonholed under "D"—Dangerous. She was no longer an incident, but somebody's calculation.

Not alone, understand, because she merely touched my hand; but I haven't any flexibility of style and nuances of description to make vivid the delicate intriguing and provocative subtleties of a girl trained from babyhood in that enmeshing art. I merely have sense enough to keep out of the meshes.

But she made it clear that she would not be displeased if I smiled and wriggled around, and went through the grimaces that for some reason men do go through in getting acquainted with a strange, pretty woman. Watch any park bench any afternoon and behold the sudden coyness that leaps into the face of fat, grayed men when some slim, bold girl passes by. Little Miss Plum-Blossom was daring without being bold, seductive in a very flattering way.

She turned off into a small, intimate room almost misty from the fumes of incense, and so pungent as to be unpleasant. There was a low black table and a low chair.

At her suggestion I sat down. She dropped on to a cushion beside the chair and clapped her tiny hands, and at once an old woman shuffled through the curtains with a tray of tea and toy cups. The aged woman placed the tea and went out without a word, without a sidelong glance.

Little Miss Plum-Blossom was a sweet and solicitous hostess. She chattered, and laughed lightly, softly, and her bright, little, black eyes were always peeking at me from their corners or hiding under the fluttering lids. I did not know intimately much about Chinese, but I knew enough of course to wonder what she was up too.

Nobody was going to come in and pretend to be angry to find me with her. That was out of the question, for the Chinese do not frame up excuses to be angry. But to make a long and puzzling half-hour short: She had been put to the immemorial use of women as symbolized by the name of Delilah, and presently was begging me in whispers to say why I wanted to see Sin Chang. She did not find out.

But that she, too, should have made the effort was more astonishing than ever. Sin Chang was not a sacred person. There was no danger of him—a coolie—being contaminated by the presence of a white devil; and he could not imagine any reason for being afraid of me, a lone person in the midst of his house.

The little maiden soon realized that I was not going to tell her; but she did not lose her temper, for which I felt like thanking her. She was as sweet as ever, even when she excused herself a moment and withdrew. I suppose she reported failure. Anyway she soon came back, and after a few minutes

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more of her company, a gong sounded.

"Sin Chang 'ill see you now," she said impressively.

ALL of this hocus-pocus surrounding Sin Chang made me wonder what could be in the air. I could have got through the Seven Gates of the Sacred City with less delay.

We went through the curtains, passed through a room very richly furnished and well lighted, and came out into a very large room that at first made me think of a Chinese store, it was so cluttered with all manner of curious stuff. But there was a kind of landing reached by two steps, covered with rugs worked in rare, strong colors; and on the raised platform was a large, high-backed chair, wonderfully inlaid; and in the chair sat a big Chinaman, motionless and observant.

Little Miss Plum-Blossom bowed her nose to the floor and slowly backed from the imposing presence, leaving me alone in a vacant spot of the room. That is, for some twenty feet between me and the stage there was not a piece of furniture, only a rug on the floor; and there I stood while the Chinaman, like a yellow Solomon in all his glory, imperturbably looked down upon me.

I looked at him, wondering why he was called a "fat spider." He was not thin by any means; but fat—no. A spider, no doubt; but somehow I do not like contemptuous phrases unless they are accurately descriptive. He seemed to me to possess a family resemblance to the big personal "repsentative" I had formerly met; but as all Chinamen seem to have a close family resemblance that impression meant nothing.

"To what," he said in slow, careful, precise English, "does Sin Chang owe the pleasure of your presence?"

And, unfolding a yellow hand that had been resting on the arm of his wonderful chair, he disclosed the diamond glittering in his palm. His nails were rather long, and for so large a body the hand was claw like, thin. Not the hand I expected to see on one who had been a sampan man—or maybe he had only been born in a sampan—or maybe he had been nothing of the kind, and such a story was only told of him.

I did not answer right away, for though I was in a hurry to have the business over with, I thought that I could be as deliberate as he. I looked at him as it is sometimes well to look at a man one is not sure of; but there was nothing to be read in that full, jaundiced face—that is, he had the color of a jaundiced white man. I asked quietly—

"You are Sin Chang?"

He in turn was slow to answer, but positive enough. He bowed slightly.

"I am Sin Chang."

I turned my head leisurely, first to right, then to left, and carefully surveyed the room in all directions. There were two curtained entrances to my back; near one of them Plum-Blossom stood motionless as a little shadow.

It was a large room, and as I have said it was cluttered with junk. To my left, some fifteen feet away, was a big, heavy piece of furniture, a boxlike thing, inlaid with ivory—I suppose—and about four feet high.

I gave the room a careful scrutiny, for it is well to know something about where one is when things are likely to be unpleasant. There were only the two people in sight—the man on the chair-throne and little Plum-Blossom.

"Sin Chang," I said slowly, the tips of my fingers just inside my coat pockets, "I came here to buy a woman."

TO BE CONCLUDED

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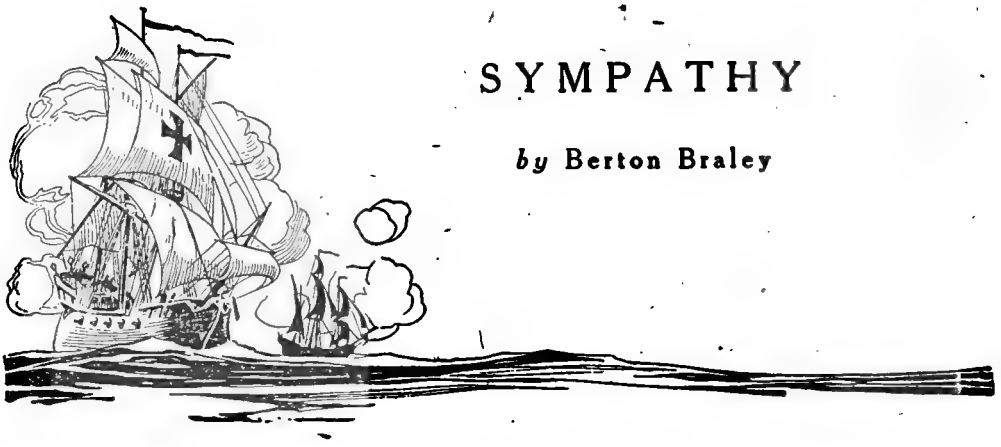

SYMPATHY

by **Berton Braley**

OLD Father Noah, who built the Ark—
While people called him a crazy mark—
He didn't fashion that ship, I'll bet,
Wholly because of the coming wet;
But down in his heart was a restless glow
That made him tickled to death to go;
And as he hammered on frame and keel
He felt exactly the way I feel!

And when Ulysses sailed home from Troy
I'll venture to say that the sly old boy,
Although he talked of his native loam,
Was in no hurry to beat it home.
He loafed and idled and stopped for sport
At many an unfamiliar port,
And, as the Odyssee will reveal,
He felt exactly the way I feel!

Now Chris Columbus and all his crew
Had "scientific results" in view—
Or so we're told—when they sailed away
And thus discovered the U. S. A.
But I think a bit of the wander-flame
Got into their bosoms just the same,
And they answered the surging sea's appeal
And felt exactly the way I feel!

Now all brave pirates and buccaneers,
And rollicking sailors of other years,
And those descended from such as they
Who roamed from Liverpool to Bombay;
In brief, all those who have known the sea,
Her lure of wonder and mystery,
Which binds with fetters as strong as steel,
Have felt exactly the way I feel!

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BIG TUSKS

by L. F. St. Mars

Author of "Union Is Strength," "Chivalry of the Wild," etc.

A COUGHING, grunting roar that brought the silence of a thousand years tumbling down into pieces; a noise of tearing silk as the long dry grass swished apart; a flash of tawny yellow, and—the whirlwind was upon him.

The baby elephant, who had been standing all alone and perfectly still, with his back to the painted glass of the forest pool where the feathery bamboos bent over and the bright-green mamba snake hung like a festoon from the rotting, moss-draped tree, took a step backward. Also he squealed. And as he did so he fell into the scum-choked stagnation that did duty as the pool behind him.

It had all happened in a wink, and the lion, going like the wind, arrived upon the spot where the baby elephant's tracks showed in the mud, one-twenty-fifth of a second after the baby elephant's funny round feet had literally fallen out of same.

And—a scream, scream upon scream, sawed through the stifling heat almost on top of the pair of them in the same instant.

The lion ripped out a growl that made you shiver and spun back upon himself, only just in time to face the towering, rocking, crashing tornado that arrived. It was the mother of that elephant calf, who appeared, as elephants have an uncanny trick of doing, apparently from nowhere.

The rest was simply abominable confusion and chaos.

It was, however, pure chance that allowed the lion to catch his opponent a crack upon the chest with his awful rending talons, which gave him time to clear himself with a beautiful back-leap while the elephant blundered, lunging madly, past him, and—there was the calf, open to the lion's attack!

Lion and elephant pivoted toward the calf in the same instant, the lion foremost.

The elephant, sitting down as she slid, grabbed the lion with her trunk by one hind leg, as a last chance. The lion doubled upon himself and, quick almost as a snake, sank his diabolical yellow fangs deep into her trunk. The elephant backed away with a scream, for an instant leaving her thrice-precious babe exposed again, and——

Ah, but no one had seen him coming—Tembo, the mighty one. That was the pity of it. He was worth paying dollars to watch then. No one had beheld the trees rock as in a cyclone, the big branches and even trunks topple and come down bodily, the immense creepers rent apart like string, the bushes flattened out by—Tembo, enormous, impending, and growing; rocking and rolling as he came like a battle-ship under forced draft in a heavy sea, screaming a trumpet-blast that could be heard for miles, tearing down upon the fight with head up and little eyes turned red.

Twelve feet from ground to head of implacable, revengeful power; nearly six tons of annihilating, crushing weight; ten feet from tip to tip of swung-out, sail-like ears; nine feet and three hundred pounds' weight of glistening, gleaming, battering-ram tusks; the whole—the whole furious, intolerant, ramping, raging bulk, I say, tearing through the frizzling sunshine at nearly twenty miles an hour. That was Tembo,

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the mighty one, king of the forest, the super-tusker whose ivories were a record.

Many men had, for his ivory, gone forth from time to time to shoot Tembo. Some had returned. Some had—not returned. Tembo remained, a power in the land that no man or beast could leave out of reckoning with safety.

The lion did not need to look round in order to "get wise" about Tembo's approach in his rear. Wild creatures become used to keeping a lookout, when they can not see, with nose and ears. He would certainly have invited himself to a more healthy distance if he could, but in the wild it is easier to get into a fight than to get out of it. The moment of "breaking the clinch," so to speak, is often the fatal one. It may mean exposing an unguarded flank.

Therefore, judging entirely by sound—and Tembo made about as much noise as a mad locomotive with all steam up—the lion side-stepped. Next instant he was crashing, on his back and without touching the ground, into a near-by bush.

He did not know quite how he got there. The bush, however, like most bushes in Africa, had thorns—four-inch ones—and he knew that he was there. Tembo, in point of fact, though he had missed and could not stop, had flung him there in passing.

Then was seen—what always surprizes people whose experience with elephants is of the museum or book variety—with what amazing agility even a big bull elephant can move his vast bulk about.

Tembo, still with much weight on, slid along in the trampled mud of the pool's edge, almost in a sitting-down position. He spun, however, like a beetle on a pin and was towering over that fateful bush before you could say, "Knife!"

THE lion's own marvelous quickness of movement we can take for granted. It was 'most like magic. Wherefore, he was already going out of the far side of that bush when Tembo arrived on the near side of it.

Then—then there wasn't any bush, only a flattened-out, trampled carpet of twigs and thorns that might have been a bush, but was now litter. Fifty yards away the king of all the beasts was doing a most unkingly sprint for his life, and Tembo, rocking like unto a ship in a heavy seaway, was reaching for Leo's tail.

Ordinarily lions seek cover, but this lion must have cursed it. It was at once too thick and useless. He had to go through it, and he did, shedding wisps of his really superb dark mane at every bound.

Tembo, on the other hand, had not to go through it, and he shed nothing, not even, as the lion did, part of his speed. He went over it, trampling it flat and behaving as if he believed it was not there. Once he collided with a tree and the tree came down with a crash.

At this the lion turned. Like all the cats he was only a sprinter—though a most sensational one—and his bolt was soon shot.

And, after all, he *was* a king. He seemed to remember the fact in that hectic moment, and halted proudly to do battle for his life.

The rest was confusion of a most stupendous kind. Pen could not paint it; no artist in his senses would try. Besides, the dense bush hid most of it—all but the upper half of Tembo's monstrous self and his trunk and tusks when they rose and fell.

But the sounds! Ah, the noises—they were enough! They were more than enough. They were too much, and outside a nightmare not possible to conceive.

At last, however, Tembo came back; leisurely, as was his wont, slouching carelessly; silent as a great, great shadow. The dying caldron of the sun shone upon the angry red about his pillar-like legs. There were marks as if a grapnel had fouled him on his huge flanks, and the tips of his tusks seemed to have been dipped in carmine.

But there was no lion; nowhere, by any kind of chance, was there any sign of a lion. He had literally gone back to the earth whence he came—"dust to dust" in very truth—stamped flat, a horror of horrors even in a land of horrors, a "transfer" of a beast, an impression in and upon his mother earth.

Then you behold old Tembo leading that female elephant away; shouldering her along, noiseless as his own enormous shadow but quite, quite master of the situation. The cow was bleeding profusely, and the calf, trotting between his mother's forelegs, bore marks. None of them, indeed, felt quite as they had felt; but what is that to an elephant? They can take in their stride, by way of "the daily round, the trivial task," and without turning any of their few hairs, wounds that would fairly pulverize any other beast.

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THAT night when the moon had climbed to her throne in the sky and all the shadows stood clear-cut as a tessellated floor—but some moved and dissolved into nowhere—and all was as still, except for the booming of an ostrich like a far-away war-drum, as it will be on the Last Day, Tembo and his consort joined the elephant herd—*their* herd.

The herd was fifty and one strong, grouped and motionless in the bush; yet, except when one moved a great sail-like ear or switched the tuft at the end of his tail, you actually, though you might have been standing within yards, could not see them. This, by the way, is one magic of the elephants; they have others equally disconcerting.

Tembo, whose great head appeared to be essentially practical, at once got a move on. Perhaps they had only been waiting for him.

But Tembo did not lead the way. He bowed to the superior cunning of the opposite sex and let a lean, long, old spinster do that. He himself kept discreetly in the middle of the herd, a position more healthy on trek for one whose tusks measured nine feet and showed up like a monitor's twelve-inch guns.

Fifty and one elephants moved through the forest, yet, except when a tree snapped or a rampart of thorn-bush dissolved, crackling like musketry-fire before their path, they might have been a company of enormously magnified ghosts or their own great shadows come to life, for all the noise they made.

And that is another magic of the elephant people. Mostly they moved in single file or a long, irregular line, cutting and flattening a swathe through the bush as if a circumscribed cyclone had passed that way.

At times Tembo swung aside, caught hold of a tree with his trunk, bringing it down with a crack like a pistol-shot and a crash in that immemorial silence, or uprooted it with his tusks—they were shallow-rooted mostly, these trees—or got it on the swing, butting with his forehead till it collapsed. Then he gathered up fruit, foliage, branches, twigs and all, and thoughtfully walked on, chewing a mouthful of wooden fuel, carrying perhaps a spare fagot in his trunk to go on with.

And you think it very strange that an elephant should chew bark and wood-branches as a girl chews candy, but when you remember that each one of Tembo's teeth was thirteen inches long, three and a half inches wide, and weighed about nine pounds, you will not perhaps feel such surprize.

His tusks were another matter. Tembo was mighty careful how he used them. There was one elephant in the herd who had not been careful and who had broken his right tusk short off over the little matter of rooting up a big tree, and the stump had rotted, causing agonies which soured the temper of the owner and caused him to be a public danger ever since.

In spite of feeding, however, the herd was traveling fairly fast, and it was evident that with the uncanny knowledge elephants possess of the map they knew quite well where they were going.

Once in long grass—ten-foot and thick at that—Tembo, whose trunk was as good as a wireless installation to him, turned aside swiftly with a sudden trumpet. There was a sound as of silk tearing quickly as a big body, or bodies, swished quickly away, and as Tembo charged volcanic rumblings shook the hidden dark. But the lions had gone, taking their pride of kingship with them.

Once also the next elephant ahead of Tembo threw up his trunk with a sudden blast of rage, caught hold of a big bough and wrenched it, all crackling down in showers of twigs; and an explosion of snarls and a vision of a spotted something whirling through the bars of moonlight proved that a leopard had been lying along that bough.

Once, too, monkeys, unseen and gibbering, pelted Tembo with other things than vile abuse, but the monster turned in his rage—he hated monkeys, who alone have the power to throw things as man has—and catching hold of one of the trees they were on, bent it bodily in his tremendous power almost to the ground. It resisted his efforts, however, to snap it, being youngish, and crashing away in pettish fury, Tembo let it go.

It went—*swish*—back to the vertical. Also one monkey who had been just too slow leaping to the next tree went—*swish!* The tree shot back into position as if it were a catapult and the monkey was the stone.

But for all their tremendous bulk and power how astonishing, aye, indeed, miraculous, was the almost dainty tread and all but scientific care of the herd. Thus you

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see Tembo once, taking a line of his own, swing aside without a pause as a six-foot green and deadly mamba snake, surely unseen in the gloom, coiled itself hastily up into the foliage from which it had hung in his course. And also when, all following in line along a path trodden, a beaten high-road, by the game through the bush for countless centuries, every elephant as it came to a certain spot, without pausing for a single instant in their smooth, shuffling, swift walk, swung out of line in silence and making a detour, rejoined the game-path farther on.

It looked like battle-ships in "line ahead" swinging out to let by a sailing vessel. And I can swear that, even if it had been broad daylight, you or I would have walked straight into the deep, horribly spiked, concealed pitfall which every elephant had detected in the dark night bang in the middle of the path. This last was the work of natives.

MIDNIGHT found the herd halted on the forest's edge, grouped about in little parties, silent as the tomb, invisible almost as the ghosts themselves that haunt the tomb. Before them stretched the fields and gardens, *shambas* of a big native village hard by. These represented a season's harvest, food against famine—all the crops of the village. Here and there in the *shambas*, perched like pigeon-cotes aloft, stood little huts on posts for the shelter of the watchmen who guarded the crops by night and who were naturally asleep.

Half an hour the herd spent in taking observations. Then, led by Tembo now—who by silent consent had instantly taken command—the herd moved out and fed, and the feeding of fifty and one elephants among crops is no small matter. A typhoon in that place would almost have been cheaper. But nothing could have been less typhoon-like than this disaster in the making; the giants of the forest feed almost as unobtrusively as rats, and twice as carefully.

Indeed, except for the steady calling of a nightjar, the caustic comments of a few monkeys and the subdued, sleepy chatter of a disturbed guinea-fowl or two, the *shambas* appeared to be possessed of moonlight and inky shade alone and of nothing else.

The herd, in fact, might have fed their feed and departed silently as they had come if, some two hours before dawn, in that darkest hour of the twenty-four when all the world seems dead or sinking into death, that precise devil who lives in violent toothache had not prompted the one-tusked bull to seek a sacrifice. He did, and, the marvelous scenting-power that lives in the trunks of all elephants guiding him, he calmly pulled down one of the elevated lookout huts of the native watchmen.

The yell that announced the arrival of the suddenly awakened woolly one, sliding head-first upon the back of the one-tusked reprobate below, was the first that super-giant Tembo knew of the affair; but it was not the last.

Those grain and vegetable fields awoke. The native village back of them awoke and all the echoes back behind the village in the forest and the forested hills, they were awakened too.

Apparently every man and woman and piccaninny in those parts who did not possess a wooden drum possessed a horn. Many had torches. Some kicked dying fires into volumes of sparks and all possessed voices—very lusty voices. The din suddenly awakened by that one terrified human yell was remarkable, and the illuminations quite A-1.

The one-tusked ruffian, now joined by an absolutely tuskless bull of evil repute, objected to the fires, as elephants often will, and trampled them out and scattered their owners among the embers and flying sparks.

But Tembo, weighted with awful responsibility that goes with three hundred pounds of ivory, did no such crazy thing. After forty seconds of fan-eared, stark, statuesque rigidity at the first alarm, he—well, he was not there. He faded back into the moon-haze that gave him birth. He receded like a dissolving view. He evaporated spirit-fashion and without a sound. And all the herd except the berserk detusked pair of hooligans went with him.

Forty and nine elephants gone—in a breath! Only the débâcle they had created remained in their track; nothing, not even the dark could hide *that*.

DAWN—cool, calm, clean and pitiless—revealed the elephant herd, or revealed the backs of the elephant herd, still going in single file, still silent as spooks, through dense thickets of bamboo and tawny grass jungle.

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Tembo, the mighty one, was leading now; and setting a pace that none, perhaps, save elephants could hope to follow. He seemed to be anxious to get on, and he got on, through and over everything; even across a river, and the jungle or the forest did not grow that could bar his tremendous way.

The regal sun, crimson, gold, saffron and yellow, had been up an hour. For some time the gray lauries had been calling, "Go away! Go away!" and the vultures were hanging themselves up in the kindling heavens, and the heat was beginning to become a factor before Tembo gave the invisible, inaudible signal to halt.

And the herd halted in a series of glades in otherwise dense forest. And that spot was nearly thirty miles from the scene of the overnight foray.

Then was seen a peculiar phenomenon and a rather mysterious one. Although no sound had been uttered or visible sign made, it was obvious that the herd acted under some mysterious direction, as the far-flung battle-fleet maneuvers obedient to the dictates of the wireless command.

The cow elephants, with young and without, herded together and sought the shade under the edge of the forest itself in groups and alone. The bulls—four in number—drew apart and stood together in a group under a giant lone fig-tree upon a little knoll—all facing in the direction the herd had been going and down-wind, with Tembo a little apart from these again, but close to them and alone facing up-wind in the direction whence they had come.

And upon all was a suggestion of waiting, an appearance of expectancy both uncanny and inexplicable. Wonderful to say, indeed, though so huge and rarely still—from flapped ear to shifting foot, to restless, air-testing trunk—those great beasts were in sympathy with their surroundings so marvelously that before you had seen them you would probably have found yourself right among the herd.

AFTER half an hour that for which it now seemed the great beasts had been waiting turned up. The one-tusked bull and his crony without any tusks at all arrived, following on the trail—unmistakable by smell and sign—of the herd, and in single file.

When still one hundred yards or more away from the mammoth fig-tree, the tuskless bull stopped short, but the one-tusked bull—the light of killing and destruction, if not of pain, still smoldering in his unforgettable little eyes—came on till he checked and stood about a gun-shot length in front of Tembo.

Thus placed, then, for some minutes the two eyed each other, apparently placidly, almost motionless, enormous, somber and brooding.

Then, so suddenly that a serval cat who had crept out after a weaver-bird jumped back in fear, Tembo beat the ground hollowly with his trunk and without any warning at all he charged. It was a most unexpected thing, this fan-eared, straight-trunked, trumpeting, lowered-head onset of the tremendous leader upon his fellow.

So, too, was the way the one-tusked bull met Tembo, for he did nothing. At least he did nothing except swerve a little at the last moment, and that seemed to be worse than nothing, for it caused him to receive his opponent's full weight upon his right shoulder. The mere impact alone was appalling, and the crash of it seemed to shake the ground.

The one-tusked bull staggered plainly, blundered sidewise and recovered. A great flaming bar of crimson leaped out in the sun upon his shoulder as Tembo drew back, but the former came round quick as a cat and the two collided together, forehead to mighty forehead, tusk striking tusk with a monumental heave.

For long minutes the two lords of the forest strained, head to enormous head, such a strain in mere foot-pounds' pressure alone as one can scarcely guess at, rocking and snorting as they pushed. Finally however, breathing hard through his trunk in great gasps, the one-tusked bull began to give ground, and at last, freeing himself cleverly, brought his single ivory round upon Tembo's flank with terrific force.

The resulting wound would have crushed the life out of any save an elephant, but its sole effect upon Tembo was to cause him to bring his trunk down across his antagonist's face with a force that would surely have brained even a lion.

The one-tusked bull drew back and in a breath Tembo had charged him. The blow, incalculable in its force, was a full, square one. Tembo's tusks landed full upon the foe's side and the latter staggered heavily and blunderingly away, snapping off a

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small tree with which he collided with a crack like a pistol-shot.

And in that instant the tuskless bull, who had all the time stood motionless a hundred yards away, trumpeted suddenly and shrilly and fled. The four bulls who had stood together all the while under the big fig-tree, not even watching the fight, suddenly threw up their trunks and out their great ears, and—a terrific report rent the primeval silence of the woods literally asunder from sky to earth.

The one-tusked bull faltered, swayed, blundered heavily to one side, screamed shrilly, and with a crash that made the very ground tremble fell headlong.

Another report, ripping and clapping like thunder bang overhead, followed upon the heels of the first and Tembo, who had turned instantly and hurled himself at the forest like a devastating avalanche, staggered perceptibly as the terrible .730-grain, twelve-bore bullet, driven by nine drams of powder, took him.

The elephant-hunter in Tembo's path had no time to reload, no time to run, scarce time to think, even. He went down before that awful onslaught as a cat would go down before a charging guardsman.

He had come, he persuaded himself, only to avenge the damage done overnight in the *shambas* of the natives, who had sent swift word to his camp in the morning to apprize him of the inroad. He had come—but he would never have surprized or caught up old Tembo, the mighty one, if Tembo had not stayed to execute the rough justice of herd law; that is, to turn out a member whose murderous temper had made him a danger to all the rest.

And as it was, there was, for all practical purposes, nothing of that hunter left after Tembo had passed over him, and his heavy rifle was smashed to matchwood.

And Tembo! Ah! Who knows? The oldest, most inscrutable, most mysterious of all the wildernesses, Africa, keeps and guards her secrets well.

You have a picture, hours later, of Tembo, enormous, towering, reeling like a drunken beast, supported on one side by the cow elephant whose calf he had saved, on the other by the lean, cunning old-maid elephant who generally led the herd, both leaning in with their full weight toward him to keep him up.

You see them in silhouette, all alone, staggering, stumbling, rolling, rocking in mighty unison, heading straight into the furnace gate of the setting sun, and—that is all. The jungle swallowed them up.

STANDING ROCK

***by* Frank H. Huston**

THE Indian agency of this name is derived from a small rock on a near-by eminence on the Missouri River, the stone itself being an object of considerable reverence and awe to both Arickarees and Sioux.

As the legend runs, a 'Rickaree or "'Ree" squaw, becoming angered, left her lodge with her infant in a blanket on her back. She went to this site to pour forth her rage and grief and remained there throughout the night.

In the morning her people in searching for her found only this rock, since considered sacred—"medicine"—as it is the woman and child changed to stone. They painted and dressed it and made sacrificial offerings of beads, arrows, etc., to it.

Some years after the "'Rees" had moved farther up the river a Sioux war-party found it so decorated. One of the braves said scornfully, "It is holy only for the 'Rees," and tore off the clothing, rubbed off the paint, and scattered the offerings.

Proceeding, the band met the 'Rees, and in the ensuing fight the scoffer was the first person killed.

In this manner it became sacred to the Sioux, who have ever since kept up the custom of decorating and making offerings to it. The sign is Stand, Rock, and sometimes Medicine in addition.

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The MATE of the ANDROSINA

by Frederick William Wallace

Author of "Hard-Luck Finnegan," "The Education of Billy Stream," etc.

IN HIS executive business office Thomas G. Mitcham, president of the Mitcham Shipping Corporation, slowly unfolded certain papers which he took from an envelope postmarked "Valparaiso, Chile." He commenced to read with a face set and stern and an expression of pain showed in his eyes.

Mitcham had started life as a sailor before the mast in Maine coasters. At twenty-eight he came out to the Pacific Coast as master of a Cape Horner. He left the sea then and started up in the shipping and lumber business when the country was young.

The qualities which served to push him from the forecastle to the command of a three-skys'l-yarder helped to impel him to the forefront of the industries he specialized in, and at the present moment he ranked as one of the big men of the West Coast.

It was after office hours and he was alone save for the night clerk in the outer office. The latter had received instructions to admit two persons when they called. One was Captain Walter Stewart, superintendent of the Mitcham fleet, and the other was Professor Ambrose Thompson, scientist, inventor, and president of the Thompson Electric Corporation. When they arrived the night clerk was to lock the office doors.

He shipped on the *Western Star* as ordinary seaman

Mitcham was reading:

under the name of Thomas G. Walker. During the voyage from Newport News he was fearfully abused by the mate, Stotz, and his life was a regular hell. He was bullied and knocked about in the most brutal manner——

A paragraph upon which his eyes rested for an indefinite period ran:

. . . the men say that Walker threatened the mate with the law upon the arrival of the ship in Valparaiso and the man became afraid of punishment. They say he started the mizzen-topgallant brace while Walker was on the yard. As it was blowing hard and very dark at the time it is difficult to prove this. The lad was hurled from the yard, crashed head-first on an iron davit as he fell and went into the sea. As nothing could be proved against William Stotz he went north with the *Western Star* and was discharged in Seattle without a character by the master of the ship.

Mitcham slowly laid the papers down on his desk and his eyes filmed with tears. He ran nervous fingers through his graying hair and stared at the documents, unseeing, and his shoulders shook spasmodically.

"Poor little Tommy," he murmured hoarsely. "Poor little son. You shouldn't have gone. You hadn't the strength and I knew it. But you had the Mitcham spirit and you ran away from college to sea, following the trail of your old dad——"

He stopped, choked in his utterance by the emotion which possessed him, and buried his head in his hands.

"Over the side—down from aloft—in the South Pacific—my son's grave."

There were wet splashes on the polished mahogany of the desk.

Ten minutes later he was his old self again and listening to the report of Captain Walter Stewart.

"We have secured the ship all right and I've picked up a bunch of tarriers for a crew. They're all our own men—fellows who have been in our ships for years—and there are some hard nuts among them. I

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got McGuire, that ex-Navy pug, who's master-at-arms on the *Kalani*, and I've told the wife that I'm about to go to Australia on business. As far as my end of the game's concerned I'm all ready."

Mitcham nodded gravely and turned to a thoughtful-looking, bespectacled man who was intently studying smoke-rings from his cigar.

"And you, professor?"

The other laid his cigar down and leaned forward.

"I've been aboard the ship, Tom, and I've already got something lined up. My greatest difficulty—that of getting leave from Mrs. Thompson to go to Australia—has been overcome, and they are making various apparatus for me at the plant. I'm prepared to serve you in my menial position and I hope you won't growl at the meals. I'm likely to be a busy man aboard that ship."

Mitcham smiled sadly.

"Well, gentlemen, I appreciate your kindness and interest in my behalf and I only hope things work out as planned. It is the only thing we can do. We can not invoke the law upon that man Stotz——"

He paused and a grim, determined expression showed in his mouth and eyes as he added harshly—

"We must be a law unto ourselves."

"He's in Vancouver, is he?" queried the professor.

Mitcham nodded.

"Yes. My friend Robinson has him under his eye and Robinson will pick him up when I say the word. If you are ready, my friends, I'll wire Robinson tonight to bait the trap."

"We're ready."

BILLY STOTZ stamped into the Good Chow Café in Vancouver and, after hanging his hat on a peg, inserted his big body into one of the compartments with which the place was lined. Stotz was in ill humor and the scowl which usually graved his harsh features was seldom absent of late. He had been "on the beach" for some months now and he was tired of it; tired of loafing around the wharves and fed up with the drudgery of the occasional jobs which kept him from starvation.

When a man has a mate's license and has been mate of fair-sized ships it is a bit of a comedown to be scraping and painting fishing-boats and hustling freight for the wherewithal to eat and sleep.

Stotz hungered for the days of authority and longed for a chance to boss men. But Stotz's mentality was that of the slave-driver. He ordered with oaths and encouraged opposition that he might have the opportunity to enforce his will with kicks and blows. He was a sea-bully, a driver, a bucko with a Nero-like soul and a love for inflicting pain. The times, however, were becoming too humane for men of his type.

On his last ship a lippy kid of an ordinary seaman had run foul of him, and because he happened to fall from aloft one dark night the skipper bluntly accused Stotz of having a hand in the accident.

"You hazed that lad the whole passage," the shipmaster had said, "and you've made a reg'lar hell-boat reputation for my ship. I don't need ye any more, mister, and I'm giving ye a dirty discharge. You won't get a mate's berth on any American ship if I can help it."

After many tribulations in Seattle and other American West Coast ports, Billy Stotz drifted over to try his luck in Canada.

But Vancouver was not much of a signing-on port for mates. The craft that frequented the port were mostly "lime-juicers" whose crews stuck by the ships. Other crafts were British and Japanese steam tramps and Stotz had only a "square rig ticket" as mate. He finally decided to remain in Vancouver until he could save enough money to go East. He was not making the money. Hence the grouch.

"Plate o' beans, cup o' coffee, 'n a couple o' doughnuts," he barked to the Chinese waiter tendering a stained and greasy menu-card. "And bring a paper if you have one."

In a minute or two the Oriental brought the order and a *Vancouver Province*, and while he was absorbing the food Mr. Stotz scanned the "Help Wanted" columns.

" 'Learn to draw,' " he quoted audibly. " 'Cartoonists make big money.' 'Be a railway mail-clerk,' 'Pleasant home work addressin' envelopes,' 'Man to tend garden and run a car.' Why'n —— ain't there no jobs for a sailor? 'Will pay forty dollars to man to paint my house.' "

He grunted and read that again.

"Might tackle that. I kin paint——"

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He stopped, his eye arrested by a large advertisement headed—

MATE WANTED.

"Oho!" He dropped his fork and held the paper toward the light.

Mate wanted

he read

for American full-rigged ship. Must have United States license and be used to handling square-sail. Apply Mr. Robinson, Dominion Bldg., between two and five P.M.

He read the paragraph again and tore the item out of the paper.

"Good enough," he murmured hopefully. "I'll be there with bells on."

And he waded cheerfully into the beans again.

STOTZ did no work next morning but employed the time having a bath, a haircut and a general spruce-up. Much of the period was spent in concocting a plausible explanation for his lack of a reference from his last ship. A few minutes prior to the opening hour for seeing applicants he was in the office of J. W. Robinson, Shipping Broker, and asking for that gentleman. Two other men, unmistakably seafarers, were also in the office awaiting Mr. Robinson's pleasure. One of them addressed Stotz.

"Tryin' for that mate's berth, mister?"

The other grunted noncommittally as his questioner continued.

"Dern funny thing, ain't it, why they sh'd advertise for an American mate over here? Sh'd imagine the woods was full o' them 'crost the line."

"The woods is full o' bums an' rumhounds, maybe," growled Stotz truculently after getting a whiff of the other's breath, "but good square-rig American mates ain't growin' on the bushes these days. They're all in steam and fore'n'afters."

The other man shook his head doubtfully.

"There's lots o' men to be got in Seattle an' 'Frisco——"

The door of a private office opened and a smart young man of about thirty-five called out—

"Step inside one of you men!"

The other two advanced but Stotz elbowed them none too politely aside and entered the office ahead of them.

Giving Stotz a keen glance, Mr. Robinson spoke.

"Your name?"

"Stotz—William Stotz is my name, sir!"

The other closed the door.

"Sit down, Mr. Stotz."

And while the mate was lowering his huge frame into a chair Mr. Robinson's keen eyes flashed an expression of relief. He picked up a typewritten sheet from his desk and said:

"I am asked, Mr. Stotz, to secure a competent mate for an American ship now loading at Bishop's Mills, Washington, for Sydney, Australia. She is called the *Androsina* and is, I believe, a rebuilt English iron ship which got ashore on the Columbia River Bar and was salved and repaired in the United States.

"Now mates are not so scarce that they need be advertised for, but certain kinds of mates are not common nowadays. The master of the *Androsina* is part-owner of her and an old-school Maine Yankee sailorman who has taken to sea again after a long spell ashore. He's had two or three mates already and has fired them because they were too slack, or lazy, or lacked 'pep.' He wants an old-time mate, he says, a driver and a man with fists to rouse lazy, cheeky sailors around—'the kind you read about but seldom see' are the words this old skipper uses."

Mr. Robinson paused and looked keenly at Stotz. The mate was figuratively licking his lips at the prospect and the exultant cruelty expressed in his mouth and eyes impressed the ship-broker, who mentally congratulated himself that he wasn't a sailor under the command of such as Stotz.

"I reckon I kin qualify, Mr. Robinson," said the other in his growling voice, "for that's the reason why I'm out of a berth jest now. I was discharged from my last ship 'cause I kep' her crowd a-humpin'. But her old skipper was afraid the crew 'ud make trouble for him so he fired me and we had words. He was too humane. Ye can't treat the cattle ye get at sea nowadays with kid gloves if you want to get the work done. Swabs, I calls 'em, hoboes 'n' swabs. Ain't no real sailormen nowadays, mister."

The ship-broker smiled coldly.

"I s'pose you're right, Stotz."

Then with a knowing look he said—

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"Of course, you know why this old skipper wants a live mate?"

The other didn't know, but made a bold guess.

"To run the ship down-East fashion, eh? Hammer the crews 'n' make 'em run when we reach port, sir?"

Robinson laughed somewhat artificially.

"You've got it, Stotz. I see you've been in the game before. And, speaking confidentially, in this case there will be so much added to your wages according to the number of hands who skip in Sydney. The hotter you make the *Androsina*, the more dollars to you."

Mr. Stotz grinned—a wolfish smile—and he smacked his huge fists together as Robinson touched a button. A clerk answered and the ship-broker said:

"Tell the other applicants not to wait. The berth is filled."

"A rare dog, this Robinson," thought Stotz, elated. "He knows an able man when he sees one. Ain't asked to see a reference or a derned thing. Takes me on my looks. This'll be velvet—pure velvet."

And aloud he inquired—

"Might I ask who is master of the *Androsina*, sir?"

"Mitcham—Captain Thomas Mitcham," answered the other, eying Stotz somewhat closely. "Do you know him?"

The mate murmured the name two or three times to himself and finally observed:

"A stranger to me, sir. Don't know him, but I recall a shipping concern of the same name. Steam tramp owners——"

"No connection whatever," interrupted Robinson a trifle hastily, and he proceeded to the business of the engagement.

TWO days later Mr. William Stotz, accompanied by his dunnage, arrived on board the American full-rigged ship *Androsina* and asked for Captain Mitcham.

"He's not aboard," answered a somewhat dull-looking fellow of about forty who was lolling over the poop rail smoking a cigaret. He gave Stotz a lazy scrutiny and spoke again—

"Anything I kin do for ye, mister?"

"Yes," barked the other. "Where's the second mate?"

He of the vacuous countenance grinned, and the cigaret hung sloppily from his lower lip.

"I'm that guy, mister. I'm second mate aboard this ballyhoo."

Stotz decided that he would take hold right there and then.

"You are, are ye?" he growled truculently. "Then, Mister Ruddy Second Mate, you can call a hand to git my stuff aboard and into my berth."

Mister Second Mate still carried his vapid grin.

"An' who may you be, mister?" he asked slowly and favoring Stotz with an up-and-down stare.

"The noo mate, ef you want t' know. Stotz is my name, William Stotz, and I'm a live one. Ef you 'n' I are goin' to make a hit you'll need to show some life around here."

He straightened his broad shoulders and glowered saturninely at the sloppy one.

The latter ignored the threat and held out his hand.

"I'm glad to know you, Mr. Stotz," he said stolidly. "I'm sure we'll git along. My name's Stewart—Walter Stewart. The Old Man's ashore. Don't know when he'll be aboard, but he left a note for you with th' stoo'ard——"

"Get it!" snapped Stotz, "and show me my berth."

And he followed the slouching Stewart below.

The note from the captain told Stotz to take charge and get the ship ready for sea.

I will not join you until the last minute. Have the ship out in the stream and hove short at six A.M. Tuesday. I shall bring the crew out with me on the tow-boat.

With the assistance of shore hands Stotz got the *Androsina* ready for her voyage across the Pacific and incidentally formed the opinion that Stewart was a "bonehead" and hardly knew the difference between the forebitts and the main-brace bumpkin. The steward, Thompson, was another "mug"—a gabby, doddering article with no brains, who wasn't on to his job. Stotz wondered what the skipper would be like. If he fancied a tough mate he certainly picked two lemons in the other members of the afterguard.

On Monday night the ship was in the stream to an anchor and ready for sea.

"Keep yer donkey fire banked and have steam to raise the hook at six to-morrow morning," he told the donkeyman, and he

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retired to his room to muse over the coming voyage and the percentage that should come to him if he played his cards right.

"Twenty hands for'ad—barrin' the bosun, carpenter and sail-maker. I sh'd be able to make the whole twenty skip 'n' I reckon I will or my name ain't 'Bully' Stotz for nawthin'."

He spent a pleasant evening oiling his revolver, polishing a pair of brass knuckle-dusters and making a new lanyard for a short oaken club. The man-handler was clearing for action.

IN THE gray dawn the tug came alongside and disgorged a crowd of men upon the *Androsina's* decks. Twenty-three hands, lugging their dunnage, went forward. One man came aft and was met at the poop ladder by Mr. Stotz.

The mate saw in Captain Thomas Mitcham a proper "hard-case down-East Yankee." The cold, gray eyes, the impassive face and thin, set lips, the square clean-shaven jaw and calm, clipped speech impressed Stotz.

This heavily built, gray-haired sea-captain of fifty-five or thereabouts was of the type who took his position seriously and who carried an Olympian air of command.

"There was no flies on him," thought the mate and he would blossom under the ægis of such a skipper. He would make the reputation of Stotz and the *Androsina* something to be talked about in ship's foc'sles for a hundred years to come.

"My name is Stotz, sir," volunteered the mate. "I took charge, sir, accordin' to your instructions."

The captain gave him a searching, all-embracing glance. His right hand tightened on the handles of the suitcase he was carrying and the leather creaked with the pressure, while the muscles bulged faintly in his jaws. Beyond these things, discernible only by a minute observer, he gave no other expression of his feelings in first viewing the "old-time bucko mate" he had advertised for. Nodding curtly at the officer's information, he said quietly:

"Pass your hawser to the tug and get your anchor. We'll tow out immediately."

He went into the cabin and the mate went forward.

When the ship was under weigh and the tow-boat was hauling her down the bay, Stotz came aft. He noticed one or two things while forward. The first thing he mentally remarked was that the crew were all sober—a rather uncommon state of affairs on an outward-bounder. The second thing that impressed him was the able-bodied, one hundred per cent. American-British, respectable appearance of the crowd.

Billy didn't like that. A Yanko-Limey gang would prove a tough proposition to handle. Billy preferred a foremast crowd of Dutchmen and dagos—a herd with racial antipathies who would not hang together and put up a united front against the officer who "horsed them around." These latter, as a general rule, lacked the pugnacity and sand of the Anglo-Saxons in resenting aggression.

The tug let them go off the Lightship, and Stotz was well braced for trouble when sail-setting began. But he found it hard to start trouble. The foremast hands were all able seamen and knew where the topsail halyards belayed.

They didn't go running around the decks like lost sheep looking for the gear, and when an order was given they obeyed coolly and smartly—affording Stotz no excuse for "opening the ball" by laying out some one.

As he fingered the brass knuckles in his jacket pocket he endeavored to incite revolt by backing his commands with ugly words and blistering oaths, but the crowd took no notice. They sensed the brutal desire in the mate's heart and did their best to thwart the satiation of his cravings.

For three days they stood him off, and Stotz was wondering whether or not his nature had undergone a change. He hadn't the ghost of an opportunity to clip any one. He had called them names—certain names which invite retaliation from the most spineless—but they were deaf to them. One man, a broken-nosed Irishman called McGuire, had shown a flash of resentment, but it came to nothing. However, Mr. Stotz had his first run-in with his watch on the third night.

They were squaring mainyards and the mate was slacking away the lee braces while the men were hauling away on the opposite side of the poop. The crowd were singing out and pulling away in fine style rounding in the yards when Stotz started to curse them for "a lazy pack of useless paper-backed farmers!"

Some one told him to "dry up and go to

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——!" and this was the officer's excuse to raise the curtain. He belayed the brace in a trice and whipping a greenheart pin out of the mizzen rail, hove it with all his strength in the direction of the voice.

Inflamed with the lust to inflict bodily pain, he didn't care whom he hit with the heavy missile. All he wanted was an excuse to jump in among the men and smash their faces with brass-shod knuckles or stamp their ribs in with heavy boots.

The mate had no clear recollection of what happened after he threw the missile. It seemed to him as if every man in his watch had a belaying-pin handy and had hurled it at him and most of them landed on his body. Suffice to say, he regained consciousness to see Captain Mitcham standing over him with a drawn revolver and Stewart shining an electric hand-torch in his face.

"A —— of a mate you are," the captain said in a biting, sarcastic voice which cut Stotz like a whip-lash. The second mate looked stupidly on.

"Go 'n' doctor yourself up," the skipper ordered him. "Your watch have mauled you around some."

Stotz rose to his feet and, dazed, limping and furious with rage and the pain of the blows he had received, went below and held communion with cold water and arnica, picturesque oaths and terrific threats of vengeance. It was the first time in his life that a watch had trimmed him, and he would have their pelts for it.

Next morning the mate went forward with a revolver in one pocket and the knuckle-dusters in the other. He was loaded for bear. The watch were setting the foresail and Stotz was looking them over searchingly to pick out the man who had talked back to him. A sailor was singing out at the fore-tack and he was chanteying—

"I told the mate to go to ——!"

And the others chorused—

"A long time ago!"

The mate recognized the voice of the chantey-man and sensed the significance of the words. He bristled, leaped up on the fo'csle-head and made for the man at the tack-tackle.

"You're the guy what gave me some slack lip last night——"

The chantey-man was the stocky Irishman, McGuire—a fellow with quick eyes, a broken nose and thick ears. The shoulder and arm muscles of him rippled under the thin shirt he was wearing, and his whole make-up bespoke a trained pugilist.

Stotz never got a chance to finish his accusation or to get either knuckle-duster or revolver out, for the sailor leaped out from the rope he was pulling on and was smashing the mate with well-aimed blows. The officer knew he was trapped and while he fought he roared for help and tried to get aft. But help was a long time coming, and he was ready to take the count when Stewart came slouching easily forward and ordered McGuire away.

"Ordered" is the correct term. The bonehead second mate merely drawled a "Stow that, you!" and the man who had beaten the mate's face to a gory mass of cuts and bruises dropped his hands and shuffled down the lee ladder. Mr. Stotz, dazed and bewildered, permitted Stewart to lead him aft to his cabin, while Captain Mitcham, seated at the saloon table, favored the mate with a baleful glance.

The officer bathed his bruised face and cursed the *Androsina's* crew with all the oaths he could lay his tongue to. Then he went up on deck and cursed the second mate for being so slow in coming to his aid.

"What kind of an animal are ye, mister?" he mouthed. "Why didn't ye git for'a'd with the stoo'ard, Chips, Sails and the bosun an' wade into them scum? Ye didn't know what to do? Sink me, but you're the perishin' limit as a second greaser! Ye're so gaul-derned slow that ye ain't caught up to yer age yet!"

He paused while the other regarded him vacantly.

"We've got to git that joker, Stewart," he growled on. "He's a ruddy 'pug,' I kin see that, 'n' I sh'd have plugged him with an ounce o' lead afore he got a chanct at me. It'll never do for a foremast hand to beat up a mate and git away with it."

"How are you goin' to get him?" queried Stewart with a blank face.

"Tonight—in my watch," replied the battered Stotz vindictively, "I'll lay for him when he comes aft to take his wheel. You kin stand the rest of the crowd off at the poop ladders with a gun."

The mate outlined his plan of campaign and Stewart nodded dully. Stotz felt that

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the second mate was a broken reed to lean on, but he had to ring him in. The steward, garrulous and spineless, was useless, and the skipper? Stotz would sooner die than seek his help. It would be a tacit admission of incompetency on the mate's part.

Shortly after midnight McGuire came up the lee poop ladder to relieve the wheel. The mate was waiting for him in the shadow of the mizzenmast and Stewart was standing under the lee of the weather lifeboat. As the sailor came walking aft Stotz, murderously inflamed by the hammering he had received, stood ready to smash the man's skull with an iron bar, and he had the weapon upraised to strike when his throat was seized from behind and he was thrown violently to the deck.

Grappling with his unknown opponent, the mate bawled to Stewart and got a hand free and into his jacket pocket. Grasping the handle of the revolver in there, he started firing through the cloth into the body of the man wrestling with him.

The shots seemed to have no effect; Stewart had vanished and the poop was crowded with men who piled on to the struggling mate and used fist and boot to terrible purpose. The discharge of his revolver had set the lining of Stotz' jacket afire and the smoldering cloth was burning into his flesh.

He roared and bawled for help and fought like a tiger but was finally pounded and kicked into insensibility by the vicious blows of many men. Bully Stotz had met a crowd who were too much for him.

HE REGAINED consciousness to find himself in his bunk with his clothes and boots on. He was neither bandaged nor bathed and his whole body was tortured with the pain of many blows and his face was puffed and smeared with congealed blood. For a long time he lay writhing with the agony of burns and bruises and vaguely wondered why no one had attended to his injuries.

"Stoo'ard!" he called hoarsely, and that individual appeared beside him.

"Why'n blazes haven't ye fixed me up, you lazy scum?" he growled harshly. "I kin hardly move."

The steward's face was expressionless as he replied:

"Cap'n said you was to fix yerself up. He had to get out of his bunk last night an' rescue you. He says any man what allows his watch to hammer him as your watch hammered you ain't fit to take charge of one. He says you was to attend to yerself an' report for duty as quickly as possible as he wasn't a-goin' to stand your watch.

"He said if you didn't show a leg quick he'd shove you for'a'd and make that boxer-feller McGuire second mate. He says——"

The garrulous steward was checked by a string of frightful oaths from Stotz who roared at him.

"Git t' bluey-ruin outa here, you gabby flunkey, an' bring me some hot water 'n' a cup o' coffee!"

The steward obeyed, but the mate was unable to rise in his bunk and bathe his wounds. He lay sprawled in his berth, helpless and dazed and concocting murderous plans for revenge, and the whole day passed without any person coming near him. He remained in this condition until dark.

Eight bells had struck and he was aroused by the sound of the poop bell. His room was black dark. Suddenly a circle of white light appeared on the bulkhead at the foot of his bunk and a blurred face took shape within it. As Stotz stared curiously at the phenomenon the face became clearly defined as that of a youth of seventeen or eighteen with curly hair and frank, smiling eyes.

The mate was mystified at the apparition, and then recognition flooded his dazed brain and he gave a hoarse cry—"Young Walker, b' ——!"

He stared, appalled at the vision, fascinated by it; then it vanished, leaving him almost paralyzed with fear.

He remained quiet and frightened for a long time, wondering if the whole thing was but a figment of his imagination. He was on the point of dismissing the vision as such when the circle of light once more appeared on the bulkhead. This time the legend—

Who killed young Walker?

flashed before his eyes in blood-red letters and the man cowered under his blanket and gave a hoarse bellow of terror.

The steward entered.

"Did you call, mister?" he inquired stolidly.

Stotz pointed to the bulkhead where the letters still blazed.

"D'ye see that? D'ye see that?" he whipsered in visible agitation.

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The other followed the direction of the mate's pointing hand.

"See what?" he asked calmly.

"That writin'—them letters at the foot o' the bunk," cried Stotz huskily.

The steward appeared nonplused. He stared at the blood-red legend and at Stotz with an uncomprehending expression.

"What kind o' letters? I don't see nawthin'."

The mate passed his hand over his eyes and growled an oath.

"I reckon I'm off my ruddy nut an' seein' things. Git me a drink o' whisky, stoo'ard, an' fix me up."

The steward made no reply but slipped out of the room, leaving Stotz alternately staring at the vision and cursing his eyes and conscience. He did not return with the whisky, and shortly after his departure the accusing question on the wall vanished. But the words were burned into the mate's brain and afforded him a night of agitation and the fear of impending disaster.

Next morning, feeling very sick and shaky, he managed to crawl out of his bunk. He stepped over to the mirror in the wash-stand to examine his swollen face and stopped as if petrified when he saw, staring at him out of the glass, the features of the youth with the smiling eyes. Below the likeness was scrawled in red letters—

Who killed this lad?

The sight gave Stotz such a shock that he dropped to the floor of his cabin. Avoiding the vision in the mirror, he reached for a towel and staggered out of his berth to the bathroom at the after end of the saloon. When he returned he saw with relief that the vision was gone.

"The hammerin' I got from them swabs has knocked my brains galley-west and I'm seein' things," he muttered as he pulled off his shirt to fix up the bruises on his body.

HE APPEARED at the dinner-table and the captain gave him a cold, unsympathetic glance.

"Well, mister," he said in a frigid tone, "have you rested up? Are you a-goin' to take charge of your watch this afternoon?"

"I reckon I will," growled Stotz sullenly.

And then he added with suppressed truculence—

"Why didn't you 'n' the second mate bear a hand the other night?"

The master gave Stotz a contemptuous stare.

"I reckon, mister, if I hadn't of chased your watch away from you I'd have had the job of dumpin' you to the fish in a canvas jacket. 'N I reckon, mister, if you can't take care of yourself with your watch you'd better go for'a'd and I'll put another man in your place."

Stotz subsided and nothing more was said during the meal. This cold-blooded old down-Easter was too much for Stotz.

He relieved the second mate after dinner. He was feeling considerably jarred in body and brain, and the beatings he had received had knocked the sand out of him. He would be careful with his crowd in future, but promised himself a fine reckoning when the opportunity came. A broken shackle on a tops'l yard foot-rope would send a few of them crashing to the deck, or— He'd fix up something ere the voyage was over.

During his watch on deck he went into the chart-room to look at the aneroid barometer. Plastered across the dial of it was a photograph of the lad with the curly hair and smiling eyes! With an involuntary grunt of fear the mate dropped down on the settee. Too frightened to look at the instrument again, he jumped out on deck and stood outside the chart-house to recover his wits.

Then he went to scan the dial of the taff-rail log and once again the youthful features smiled at him from the glass face of the mechanism. He passed his hands across his eyes and became conscious that the wheelsman was throwing furtive glances at him.

"What the ruddy blazes are you stargazin' at?" he barked viciously.

"How are you headin'?"

And he advanced and squinted into the binnacle. From the glass of the compass bowl the smiling face of the youth, Walker, stared up at him and Stotz, with a clammy sweat breaking out on him, gasped huskily to the man at the wheel—

"What the ——'s that?"

The man stared into the compass.

"What's what, sir? She's on her course, sir."

The mate looked into the binnacle again and once more viewed the likeness which was haunting him. Then, glancing narrowly at the impassive face of the helmsman, he turned and staggered forward like a man in a trance, muttering:

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"I'm goin' off my nut, sure. I'm seein' things what ain't there."

During the watch he lolled over the rail and tried to fathom out the whole business, but his dull wits refused to afford a reasonable solution. He almost hoped that some one was putting up a game on him, but he couldn't see it. It was beyond his limited comprehension. The Walker business savored of the supernatural or else his nerves were playing him tricks.

"I've let that ruddy young swab get on my mind," he consoled himself. "I'll be all right in a day or so."

At fifteen minutes to eight bells he went aft to look at the log and steering-compass with nerves braced to perceive the face which haunted him. There was no sign of it, however, and he noted the readings of both instruments with relief and entered the chart-room to write up the deck log. He opened the book at the page for the day and saw, scrawled across the sheet in blood-red letters—

Who killed young Walker?

Staring with fascinated eyes at the terrifying sentence, Stotz saw it fade before his gaze and the page was once more blank.

The officer trembled visibly and gingerly picked up the log-book and examined it. It was the ordinary ship's deck log and there were several entries of his own in it.

"I'm goin' bugs, sure," he croaked, and for a minute or so he was too shaken to write up the record of his watch. When he did so his hand shook so much that his writing was almost illegible.

The second mate came on the poop at four to relieve him and Sotz gave him a searching glance. The dull inanity of the man's face convinced the mate that Stewart was not playing tricks on him. Stewart had just left an English ship in the Australian trade and would know nothing of young Walker. Stewart could be counted out.

"How're ye feelin' now, mister?" inquired the second mate.

Stotz ignored the question and growled the course to be steered and went below. Matters on the *Androsina* were getting him rattled. He wanted a drink to brace him up after the shocks he had received.

The steward was in his room playing the phonograph when the mate appeared in the door.

"I want a bottle of whisky, stoo'ard," he said and stopped suddenly with blanching features. The phonograph was playing a singing record, but when the officer leaned inside the door, the song stopped in the middle of a verse and the singer shouted out—

Who killed young Walker?

Then the thread of the song was taken up and finished as it should be.

"What—what in Tophet kind of a game is this?" blurted Stotz, glaring fearfully at the steward and the phonograph.

Thompson looked up in surprized innocence.

"What, sir? What's the matter, sir?" he inquired, staring curiously at the pallid-faced mate.

"What—what did that there thing say jest now—about Walker?" growled the other, slowly recovering his nerve.

"About who? Walker? Who's Walker, sir? Why, it was only playin' a song. I'll play it over again if you like. It's a good one."

And the steward started to rewind the instrument.

"Never mind that," barked Stotz apprehensively. "Get me a bottle of hooch, *pronto!* I'm under the weather."

Mumbling to himself, the mate returned to his room with the liquor and lighted his lamp with a trembling hand. These continual and unexpected references to young Walker and the visions of the lad's face were playing havoc with his nerve, while the terrific physical punishment he had received had weakened his spirit considerably. The white lamp-shade was blank when he first ignited the wick, but as he waited to trim the flame red scratches rapidly appeared on the glass and before his panic-stricken gaze there formed the ominous words—

Who killed young Walker?

With a terrified oath, Stotz blew the lamp out.

He slumped down on the sofa, unnerved and bewildered with fear, and in the quiet of his darkened room, heard a voice talking close to him. It sounded like no one on the ship but it was speaking in clear, incisive tones—

"He started the mizzen t'gallant brace while Walker was on the yard and the boy

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was hurled from aloft. As he came crashing down his head smashed against an iron davit and he bounced into the sea. Young Walker was deliberately murdered and we know the man who did it!"

The mysterious voice paused and resumed in calm judicial utterance—

Who killed young Walker?

Even while the voice was speaking the frightened mate could hear the steward singing in the pantry and he mentally abandoned the hopeful surmise that Thompson was playing a trick on him.

STOTZ lurched to his feet and made a rush for the door of his berth. He grasped the handle and found the door locked. He tugged and pulled and charged the panels with his shoulders and booted feet, but it was an extra heavy door and it refused to budge.

He roared for the steward, but no answer came. With the sweat of fright pouring off his face and cursing and threatening with husky oaths, Stotz lighted the lamp again and hove the accusing shade to the floor where it smashed into fragments. He stood up with his back to the wall and glared around like a hunted animal.

Wherever his eyes roved the accusing words were before him. The light of the lamp revealed—

Who killed young Walker?

scrawled in red in the center of the white panels of the bulkheads. It was printed in red block type on paper strips gummed to the moldings and stenciled in red on the panel frames and overhead beams.

The very sheets and pillow-slips of his bunk flaunted the damning phrase and white cards, hundreds of them, littered the floor, and upon them were printed the question—

Who killed young Walker?

Upon the mirror of the washstand a life-sized face of the Walker lad gazed with smiling eyes at the cowering mate. The eyes were burning into his brain, and Stotz hove the whisky-bottle at the likeness and the flying glass rebounded and cut his hands and face.

He cursed and roared like a maniac for a minute with the blood dripping from him. Then he paused, panting, and slumped into a chair, glancing furtively around the room.

A voice began speaking and the mate shrank from the direction from whence it came.

Stotz! Who killed young Walker?

It was a harsh voice, chill, insistent and portentous. From behind came another dread question.

Stotz! Who started the mizzen-t'gallant-brace and sent young Walker to his death?

The terrified man shrieked:

"I don't know! I don't know! It wasn't me! I don't know anythin' about young Walker!"

The voice continued:

Stotz! Who bullied and hazed and kicked and beat and ultimately killed young Walker on the bark *Western Star?*

Then the other unknown questioner chimed in—

Who killed young Walker?

It was uncanny, brain-wrecking and horrible. The victim shrieked curseful denials and at intervals rose and charged the door of the berth. At times he slumped into his chair and held his hands over his ears.

But hour after hour the unseen inquisitors voiced their insistent questions, methodically and in the same icy tones, and wherever Stotz looked his eyes met the fateful words—

Who killed young Walker?

The words were being branded into his soul.

THROUGHOUT the night the question was shot at him. Stotz felt that he was going mad. He would have to get away from those accusing tones and the sight of the legends which forever met his eyes. He pleaded for mercy, for a let-up, for a chance to explain, but the only reply was the insistent—

Who killed young Walker?

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He heard the tramp of the watch overhead pulling at the main braces and he recognized Captain Mitcham's voice as he shouted to Stewart while taking a star sight early in the morning. This told Stotz that neither the captain nor second mate was of the unknown accusers and the knowledge unnerved him still more. While the captain was singing out to Stewart at the chronometers the voices were vibrating in the mate's ears with monotonous persistence—

Who killed young Walker?

Stotz rummaged the room looking for a weapon, but found nothing worthy of the name. His revolver, club, and even his heavy leather sea-boots were gone. Nothing in the shape of an offensive instrument remained but the fragments of broken glass.

Crazed, nerveless, and wrecked mentally and physically, Stotz groped on the floor for a splinter of mirror glass. His fingers closed on a jagged, dagger-like fragment and he regarded it with eyes in which the light of incipient madness blazed.

He was appalled by the continuous questioning. No human being could reiterate the accusing phrase in the same tones, hour after hour, with such unvarying monotony. He was convinced that his brain had given way, that he had imagined it all, that he was mad.

"It's not real!"

He shouted, threatened, cursed and bragged that he was not afraid of any living man, but the reply to such mouthings was ever—

Who killed young Walker?

He was mad all right, and they would be coming in soon to clap the irons on him. They would chain him up like a beast. Would they? He smiled cunningly and fingered the spear of mirror glass.

Who killed young Walker?

Ears and eyes absorbed the insistent question and his mental resistance was breaking up. When the porthole revealed the gray dawn stealing over the quiet sea the man shrieked defiantly—

"I did,——him! I killed the cub: Started the brace an' sent him smashin' down from aloft—the cheeky, lippy young swine!"

And he plunged the splinter of glass into his throat.

SONG OF THE YUKON

by Richard Butler Glaenzer

IF YOU'VE slept in sleeping bags
From September into May,
Loafed until your spirit sags,
Starved until your skin is gray;
Smarted where your face was bitten
By the fierce Alaska frost;
Lived to see your right-hand mitten
Worn to shreds, your snow-shoes lost;
Watched the strongest and most nervy
Go to seed through drink or scurvy
Just because the cursed ice
Holds the Yukon in a vise,
You will understand the shout,
Splitting cry of jubilee,
Heard from Dawson to the sea
When the ice goes out!

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The QUALITY of HONOR

by Lewis H. Kilpatrick

Author of "Sentenced without Law."

THE smoldering black eyes of the twin brothers met across the bed in a quick, searching glance; then, drawn by its grim magnetism, lowered again to the lifeless form which lay between them. At the foot of the bed sat an old woman, little and wrinkled, her white hair twisted into a knot at the back of her head, her talon-like hands clenched in her lap.

She and they kept watch alone in the cabin room. But she was not then looking at her dead husband; instead, with all the cunning of her threescore mountain years she studied the faces of her stepsons.

"Wal, what air ye waitin' fer?" she demanded; and the words, harsh and abrupt, sounded more like a challenge than a question.

The brothers turned toward her, caught her scrutiny, and a common impulse of aversion hardened their features.

"What kin we do?" muttered Luke, the brawnier of the two. "Me 'n Lucas don't know who laywayed him."

The woman sneered.

"Then ye'd best be a-larnin'," she retorted. "Walt McCager was yer pap; and onless ye want to be shamed afore the hull world ye'll swear by his blood that's in ye to avenge him. Ye'll do hit quick, too. Ye'll take a oath to find them that kilt him and no matter who er whar they air, git 'em both."

The brothers recoiled slightly, although she had but pronounced the first principle of the familiar feudal code of the Kentucky mountains. It was a sacred code, a part of their religion, written into the soul of each highland generation.

To do less than it commanded, they knew, would set a radical precedent in that region; it would forever brand them as cowards, traitors to the unforgiving doctrine which demands life for life.

Once more with similar emotions Luke and Lucas looked upon the mortal remains of old Walt McCager. Even death had not relaxed the sternness of his face, the stubborn jaw, the fierce aquiline nose, the eyes whose tyrannical glare seemed even now to pierce their closed lids. Often had his sons felt the wrath of those gnarled hands folded across his chest, and obeyed against their will the dictates of his silenced tongue.

"Air ye afeerd?" asked the stepmother with cutting scorn. "Air ye goin' to wait ontil yer uncles and cousins come, and let them do what ye ain't men enough to do?"

Lucas, standing at the side of the bed next the wall, flushed.

"A McCager don't swear a oath onless he aims to keep hit," he said huskily but with pride.

"Yas, if we plight our word to git them who kilt pap we air bound to do hit," Luke agreed in the same tone.

"That's jest what I'm expectin' of ye!" exclaimed the old woman. "I ain't axin' hit fer myself, recollect. Thar's none o' my blood in ye—and I know ye hate me like snakes. But that don't have nothin' to do with this here."

Her eyes glinted from one to the other.

"Put up yer right hands."

The young men hesitated. Cold sweat

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beaded Lucas' brow and a spasm of anguish distorted his features. Luke, his cheeks blanched, opened his mouth to protest, then shut it with a snap.

The stepmother rose.

"Put up yer right hands!" she ordered again. "I ain't goin' to have hit said that ye air cowards. Ye air McCagers, and like McCagers ye'll pertect yer honor. Do as I tell ye."

Slowly, as if stricken by paralysis, the brothers obeyed. With palms uplifted over the body of their father, their faces averted, they solemnly vowed not to rest until they had found his assassins—and having found them, no matter who or where, to do unto them what they had done to him.

For a moment after they finished there was silence in the room with its smoke-stained ceiling, unornamented log walls and bare floor littered with ashes blown from the fireless hearth. Then a dry chuckle sounded in the woman's throat and at the same instant from the doorway behind them came a cheery greeting:

"Good morning, folks! How's everybody?"

THE trio turned quickly. So occupied had they been that they had not heard the visitor enter. But he was no stranger to the McCager cabin. A clean-cut young man, dressed in khaki, Clay Scott hailed from the Blue Grass and represented the oil company which was buying leases and land in that section of the mountains.

"Why, what's wrong?" he ejaculated, now sensing trouble. "Is somebody sick?"

The old woman answered.

"Hit's Walt," she said briefly. "He's dead."

"Dead!" Scott repeated, looking toward the bed. "Oh, I beg your pardon for intruding. I just rode over to see him; wanted to know if he'd changed his mind about that deal. But——"

He hesitated; the trio's very stolidity embarrassed him.

"Can I be of any service to you?" he inquired. "Is there anything I can do?"

Luke and Lucas left the bed and approached him. Their manner had suddenly changed.

"Were ye goin' to make the ole man a better offer?" Luke asked eagerly, disregarding the visitor's solicitude. "Can't ye 'low to us what ye were aimin' to 'low to him?"

Scott was taken aback.

"Why—er—yes," he stammered. "But it can wait. Under the circumstances, of course— Oh, we'll talk it over later."

Lucas placed himself beside his brother.

"Wal, hit won't hurt none to do yer talkin' now," he drawled. "Pap's as dead as he'll ever be. He ain't here to act contrary as usual—and me 'n' Luke have al'ays wanted to trade. What'll ye give us?"

Clay Scott made an effort to adjust himself to the situation. After all, he was a business man and as such must not be swayed by sentimental conventions.

"Of course you three are the ones we have to deal with now," he said. "Well, we're still ready either to lease your land or buy it outright. If we lease it we'll give you one-eighth of the gross production; or we'll buy it, title clear, for a hundred thousand dollars.

"With the first proposition," he explained, "you'll gamble with us on our striking oil. But if you sell outright, we take all the risk of dry holes and you're sure of your hundred thousand. Which shall it be?"

"The money," Luke readily answered.

"Yas, with that much we kin quit these hills and live like folks ought to," declared Lucas, grinning. "Then I kin wear clothes as good as yourn"—he inspected Scott critically—"and buy me one o' them autymobiles and sport round the settlements, and——"

The voice of his stepmother interrupted him.

"I won't sell," she snapped. "This here house was good enough fer Walt and hit's good enough fer me. He didn't want no ile wells dug at his front door and I won't have 'em dug at mine."

The brothers turned on her, snarling. She met their anger with a mocking smile. Scott hastily interposed.

"That's all right boys," he said. "You can sell your part of the land, which will be two-thirds, according to the law of inheritance. That will be as much as you'd receive anyway," he added, "even if your mother was willing to sell. It'll mean about thirty-three thousand dollars apiece for you—a tolerably comfortable fortune."

Lucas and Luke's expressions showed their relief.

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"How quick kin we git hit?"

"As soon as the court divides the estate and we can make out the necessary papers."

Scott paused. He was very conscious of what lay on the bed in the far corner.

"Er—wasn't Mr. McCager taken rather suddenly?" he inquired, addressing the woman. "I hadn't heard that he was even sick."

"He weren't sick," she replied unperturbed. "He was laywayed early this mornin' when he went up the valley atter the cows."

Clay Scott shuddered, although sojourn in the mountains had accustomed him somewhat to such tragedies.

"Whoever done hit knowed that he was used to fetchin' the cows o' mornin's," she continued, "and they waited fer him. I heerd the shoots myself; thar was two of 'em. They come at the same time, one shoot from the bresh up each side o' the valley—and they plugged him in the chist. Thar was nobody to home but me at the time; the boys were out somewhar; and when I got to him he was dead."

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Scott.

"Have the murderers been caught?"

The old woman glanced at her stepsons.

"They will be afore long," she said.

The visitor knew that further inquiries would be unwelcome. He also knew that shortly other members of the McCager clan, armed and ready for feudal warfare, would begin to gather.

"If you don't mind I'll ride around and look over the farm a bit before I go back to camp," he said. "And if I can be of any assistance——"

Rather awkwardly he again proffered his services, and after expressing his sympathy, bade the family goodby.

AS HE went out the door the old woman for the first time came forward. She watched him until he had unhitched his horse and mounted; then she turned and confronted the twin brothers.

"Ye fools!" she hissed. "What do ye mean by lettin' him git away like that?"

Luke and Lucas, standing in the middle of the room, gaped at her, puzzled.

"What have we got ag'in' him?"

"Got ag'in' him!" she repeated. "Why, air ye so blind that ye don't see how hit was? He and them other ile fellers wanted this land; yer pap swore he wouldn't sell er lease hit while he lived, and they knowed that ye would as soon as he died."

Her eyes narrowed.

"That's why he did die," she exclaimed. "They wanted him out o' the way. They had him kilt. And Clay Scott, havin' been here often and l'arnt his habits, done the fixin'. He knows all about hit. That's the reason he didn't lose no time a-gittin' here this mornin' to make ye that offer."

The brothers looked at each other and gasped.

"His play-actin' didn't fool me," their stepmother went on. "He's as guilty as a dawg. He showed hit by the way he peered at Walt yonder and talked and stood round oneasy-like. I've seen too many killers not to know their signs. I kin tell 'em as quick as I sot eyes on 'em—yas, I kin!"

Lucas, gulping, protested:

"Ma, he didn't do hit. I'm shore he hadn't no hand in hit a-tall. He's al'ays been friendly and honest and even pap liked his turn. I don't believe he'd 'a' harmed the ole man fer all the ile in these hills. Mr. Scott, he ain't that kind o' feller."

"Besides we can't do nothin' to him now," declared Luke. "Hit 'ud plumb ruin the trade. He's a-goin' to pay us that money, so we kin buy the things we've been a-hankerin' fer. And I'm p'intedly sartain that he ain't guilty, no way."

The woman stepped closer to them and drew her withered figure to its full height. The cunning gleam again shone in her eyes.

"If them ile fellers didn't git Walt McCager, who did? Who else but them was goin' to gain by him a-dyin'? Tell me that, will ye?"

Neither Luke nor Lucas answered.

She pointed out the door.

"Clay Scott, he's ridin' a slow hoss and ye kin ketch him. Jest take the short cut to the road whar hit goes round the big mounting. Ye'll git thar afore him. And then when he comes 'long, ye'll know what to do."

Lucas mumbled something under his breath and avoided her gaze; but Luke, his jaw set, was defiant.

"I'm tired o' sech talk," he growled. "We can't destroy him jest on yer s'picions. I'm a-goin' to town fer the sheriff. This here's his business, not ourn."

"All right, go fetch him," she challenged. "I dare ye."

Luke hesitated, caught the expression in her half-closed eyes, and his jaw sagged.

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He stepped back and gripped his brother's arm. Lucas also saw, saw and understood, and his biceps quivered beneath Luke's fingers.

Knowing that again she had conquered, the old woman smiled grimly.

"Go git yer rifle-guns," she commanded. "Their barrels air dirty, but they'll shoot straight. Take that short cut acrosst the mounting, and hurry."

She flung her arm toward the bed.

"Remember yer oath, McCagers," her voice shrilled. "Ye swore hit, knowin' what hit meant. And if ye don't keep hit I'll see that hit's kept fer ye. Hear me?"

Without further hesitation or argument they put on their slouch hats, took their rifles from a corner and left the cabin. The stepmother, standing in the doorway, gazed after them as they started along the foot-path that led over the mountain.

Luke strode in front, his Winchester under his arm, his shoulders stooped. Lucas followed, carrying his rifle as if he feared it, wetting his lips with a tongue that was hot.

They were out of sight of the cabin before either of them spoke, but even then they did not slacken their pace.

"She hates us," Luke suddenly muttered.

"Yas, she al'ays has," said Lucas, glad of an outlet for his emotions. "Hit was her who pizened pap ag'in' us; and ever since we were young 'uns and she wed with him she's treated us worse'n varments. She's been mean to us in ways nobody else ever studied on. She's beat us and starved us and lied about us to our own kin. I hate her, too."

"So do I, the ole she-devil!"

Going up the mountainside, Lucas broke forth again:

"Luke, I don't like the idee o' pluggin' Clay Scott jest to please her. We won't git that air money if we do, fer hit'll make enemies o' them other ile men. Then I can't buy that autymobile and the new store clothes and the fotched-on fixin's I've been a-wantin'.

"I want 'em more'n anything, too. I've been a-pinin' and a-plannin' fer 'em all this time. And ye can't have what ye want, neither. The trade'll be off with Mr. Scott dead and we'll have to stay in these hills the balance o' our lives."

His brother swore.

"Wal, she said kill him. That's all I know about hit."

"Hit's all pap's fault," exclaimed Lucas. "If he hadn't 'a' been so mulish we wouldn't 'a' got into this mess. He was sot ag'in' sellin' to them ile fellers, spite o' our beggin' him to—and he never would 'a' sold 'em if he'd lived. His meanness was next worse to the ole woman's.

"He's lammed us and cussed us ever since we've been grown. 'Peared like he tried to make us hate him too—and we did. He never would give us no money er nothin', and he was willin' fer us to stay po' when we could all 'a' got rich. Hit's him that's to blame fer what's happened."

Luke, with head bent, made no reply. Lucas, his passion relieved, also became thoughtful. They trudged in silence up the mountain until they reached the summit. There they paused, resting their rifle-butts on the ground.

Below them, to one side, lay their home valley with the bereaved log cabin. No smoke issued from its rock chimney and the open front door, made tiny by the distance, yawned emptily. Half-way down the other side of the mountain wound the road, narrow and rutted, screened on its upper flank by laurel and scrub oak.

Luke looked keenly at his brother.

"Lucas, she s'picions," he said, and his tone was hollow. "Ye could tell hit and I could tell hit. Thar's no use in our foolin' ourselves any longer. I see now jest what she's aimin' at. If we git Mr. Scott she figgers we'll be kotched by the law and hung; and if we——"

He paused and caught his breath.

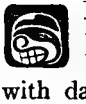
"Lucas," he whispered, "she's got us a-comin' and a-goin'. She hates us jest that bad. She's fixed hit so we can't git outen hit no way we try."

Lucas paled, but his features were calm and his voice steady.

"We'll keep our oath, that's what we'll do," he declared. "I've seen hit all the time. I felt hit a-comin' the minute she made us lift our hands and swear. That's the only way outen hit now."

"But—how?" choked his brother.

"I ain't studied 'bout that part o' hit yit. Let's be gittin' on down."



LUCAS stepped forward and took the lead as they began the descent. It was Luke's turn to follow, and with dazed senses he frequently stumbled over the rocks and roots in their path.

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Within a few minutes they reached an embankment above the road and scrambled down it through the overhanging laurel. Landslides had broadened the road at this point, but farther along, on either hand, it made a sharp bend.

Lucas knelt, put his ear to the ground and listened.

"I hear him a-comin'," he said; rising. "We might as well git hit over with right here and now, and we ain't got long."

Luke swept a desperate hand across his forehead.

"I can't do hit, I can't!" he cried. "Hit 'ud be worse'n anything I ever done. We air crazy—clean gone crazy to even have sech a idee. I can't, I tell ye, I can't."

"Ain't ye a McCager?" The query came sharply. "Don't them o' our blood al'ays keep their word?"

"Yas, but this here's uncommon. I never was up ag'in' nothin' like hit afore. Hit ain't in nature fer own brothers to do sech a thing. And, Lucas, we kin git outen hit. We kin run away, leavin' these parts right now, and that'll satisfy the ole woman."

The other's lip curled.

"Jest 'cause we done wrong oncet ain't no reason fer us doin' hit ag'in. I'd ruther be a killer twicet over then be a coward."

Luke stared at him with wonder.

"And have ye fergot about that ile money?" he quavered. "Ain't hit worth puttin' up a fight fer? Don't ye recollect all we aimed to do with hit, the good times we were figgerin' on havin' atter we got rich? Why, ever'thing'll be ruint if we——"

"Yas, I've fergot about hit," Lucas interrupted. "We wanted hit too bad, that's jest hit. Now all the money in the world don't matter. We air honor-bound to keep our oath, Luke, hit makes no difference what hit costs us. Lyin' to the dead is worse'n killin' the livin', even if we do hate the dead and keers fer the livin'. I'm a McCager!"

His words stiffened Luke. His jaw set and he squared his shoulders.

"I'm a McCager too," he affirmed. "If ye ain't afeerd, I ain't. My oath's as good as yourn. Hit's the one decent thing left fer us to do, I reckon; and the sooner we git hit over, the better.

"But—" he wavered—"but air ye shore ye won't holt hit ag'in' me? Lucas, air ye plumb shore?"

"No more'n ye'll hold hit ag'in' me," Lucas answered quietly. "Hit won't be fer us to jedge, no way. I 'low thar's a Gawd who'll do that fer us."

He turned his ear toward the bend. The approaching hoof-beats had become more distinct. Both brothers heard them now.

Impulsively they reached out and clasped hands, their eyes meeting in a long, eloquent look. Their mountain natures did not permit spoken sentiment, but it was unnecessary.

Each understood what the other said in his heart. And having determined their action, there was no further hesitation, for the stern creed of their inheritance was more sacred than life itself and admitted of no compromise.

"Ye git on that side o' the road and I'll stay on this," said Luke, gripping his rifle with both hands and dropping to one knee below the embankment.

Lucas took his position and likewise crouched, facing his brother.

"Hit's the hardest thing I ever had to do, Luke," he exclaimed. "Don't 'low fer a minute I ain't feelin' hit. But——"

"Them who kilt Walt McCager have got to pay," Luke finished for him.

His rugged features hardened; his eyes were unnaturally bright. He raised his rifle.

"Head er heart?"

"Head; hit's quicker. Ye give the word."

The hoof-beats sounded louder, now just beyond the bend. The crouching men were as rigid as the mountains about them. Each sighted along the barrel of his Winchester, his finger on the trigger.

"Hurry, afore he gits here. Air ye ready, Lucas?"

"Yas, McCager; I'm ready."

"Then—McCager—*shoot!*"

THE rifles cracked simultaneously. The valleys echoed with the double report—and at the bend Clay Scott abruptly pulled up his horse, uttering a startled exclamation.

For a minute he waited, but only silence followed. Then, dismounting, he crept along the face of the mountain, alert, watching each step before he took it. A few steps farther, and he had a full view of the road beneath the embankment.

With a cry of horror he ran forward.

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"Luke and Lucas—great Heavens!" he gasped. "And I left them at their cabin less than an hour ago! What on earth brought them over here? Ah, the feud—the feud's begun—and three McCagers murdered the first day!"

His voice shook with all the force of his civilized anger.

"By ——, their assassins shall pay for this!" he swore, for in his ignorance he did not know that the assassins already had paid.

LEAD upon the WATERS

by Philip W. Sayers

HE WAS crouched behind a tree at the top of the mountain. His lean, shabbily clothed body was tense, his light-blue eyes, normally mild, glinted from behind the contracted lids with the hard light of one whose freedom is endangered. Twice he raised his rifle and took aim, but each time he lowered it without pulling the trigger. He could not bring himself to fire—not just yet.

Far below, at the head of the ravine that skirted the base of the mountain, trudged a man, followed by a pack-mule. At that distance it was impossible to pick out details, except that the animal seemed to be rather heavily laden. Pryor swore as he watched their slow progress. The man stopped and swabbed his face with a handkerchief. He looked back in the direction from which he had come and then seemed to be surveying the prospect ahead. Then he resumed his plodding way.

It was a hot, silent mid-Summer afternoon. And down there the going was rough. Several times the traveler stopped and called his handkerchief into service. Once he seated himself on a rock and rested there for long moments, while the watcher above struggled with indecision.

After a while the man came to a sort of natural trail that led up the mountain to where Pryor was hidden, and beyond that to Pryor's shack. Again he stopped and surveyed his surroundings. Then he started up the rough trail. His advance became even slower than before. The mountainside was steep and wild, and the path, if such it could be called, was beset with boulders and brush and fallen trees. But the man fought doggedly onward, dragging the unwilling mule behind him.

He was close enough for a better view now, and Pryor shook his head in perplexity.

"Don't look like a bull after all," he told himself. "Now, what's he doin' up here? This mountain ain't exactly a Summer resort. Can't make it out. Something queer in the way he keeps lookin' back every once in a while, too."

As the man pushed his way nearer Pryor saw that he wore a wide-brimmed hat, blue shirt which was open at the neck, corduroy trousers and heavy shoes. From their appearance he judged the clothes had been purchased recently, probably at one of the towns in the nearest populated valley, which was forty miles away.

The stranger was of medium height and inclined to be fleshy. The climb up the mountainside had obviously exhausted him. His breathing was labored, his movements lethargic.

Pryor scratched the stubble on his chin thoughtfully.

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"Headin' toward my shack," he reflected. "Can't miss it the way he's goin'. Got a campin'-outfit on the mule. I'm not anxious to meet up with that bird, but if I stay out of sight he might settle down in my shack, and then I'll be out of luck worse than I am now."

He studied the oncoming figure a moment longer and then suddenly gave vent to a smothered exclamation.

"I've seen you before somewheres, pardner," he muttered. "Now I wonder if you're the low-down skunk that——"

Moving quietly and swiftly, Pryor retreated from his place of concealment and, circling around behind the trees, reached a rough lean-to that was built against the side of a huge mass of rock. Going within, he came out immediately with a rag and, seating himself on a bench, began to go through the motions of cleaning his rifle.

THREE weeks before, Pryor had drifted into Dunham City. He had not intended to come there; in fact, he had not previously been aware of the town's existence.

The manner of his arrival was characteristic. For many weary hours he had been seated on a few burlap bags just inside the slightly opened door of an empty box-car. He had crawled into the car the night before while the freight had lain on a siding awaiting the passing of a superior train.

An early-morning mist hung over the ever-changing landscape. The air was clean and sweet, except when the train passed through the frequent smoke-hung manufacturing towns. These Pryor looked upon with disfavor. There was an unrelieved sameness about them which repelled him forcibly. His days had been spent in a constant search for new places and new scenes, so that, true to the old saw, he had gathered no moss, in any practical sense. Therefore his dislike for the passing towns was heightened by the realization that he must seek work in one of them. Work to him meant manual labor, odd jobs, for which he held a futile hate.

Pryor's seat on the box-car floor had reached an acute stage of discomfort when he saw the water-tank. Some whimsical railroad painter in a reckless moment had decorated the tank with a series of horizontal yellow stripes, after putting on a bright coat of red. Pryor's eye lighted as he gazed at this work of art.

"Must be strong on prohibition in this town," he chuckled. "Guess I'll drop off and see what the burg looks like."

He had no particular destination in mind; this place would do as well as another.

He waited until he had been carried beyond the passenger station, then after a quick glance of reconnaissance dropped lightly to the ground. Walking back along the right-of-way, he came to the dingy frame station. A sign hanging at the end of the platform read, "Dunham City." Sinking into a bench with a sigh of relief, for he was dead tired after his uncomfortable ride, he turned his gaze on the resplendent water-tank, a short distance up the track.

"Pretty job," he approved. "The fellow who did that must have had a little time on his hands. Anyway, he's all right—he's got the right idea. Something different. Maybe I'll have some luck here."

Exactly what he meant by luck Pryor would have had difficulty in explaining.

The morning was still young and he was as yet breakfastless. Searching in the pockets of his nondescript garments he fished out his entire wealth, consisting of three or four bills. After contemplating these gravely for a moment he replaced them and arose.

In a dilapidated lunch-car which he found on the street that trailed off from the station, Pryor consumed an order of bacon and eggs and coffee. After that he wandered down the street to look the town over. A few horse-drawn vehicles rumbled heavily over the uneven brick pavement, interspersed with the tinny rattle of a few more small automobiles. Everything within sight was decidedly commonplace. Pryor experienced an unaccountable feeling of disappointment.

He made several half-hearted attempts at securing a job. An old man with a tobacco-stained beard who ran a feed-mill offered him work, but they could not agree on the matter of terms. The foreman of a lumber yard could use a man, but it was an inside job, and Pryor wanted to work in the open. He always assumed an independent attitude when he had in his pocket the price of a few meals. Anyway, he decided, the day was too fine to be wasted in the unedifying occupation of job hunting.

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So, finding himself on a quiet, tree-lined street, he allowed it to lead him its meandering length until finally it disgorged him on the edge of the town. A beautiful panorama of trees and grass and blue sky was spread before him. A white road lay at his feet, its far end curving alluringly over the top of a distant hill. It was the age-old challenge to questing spirits—come and see what lies beyond. Casting the problems of practicality completely out of his mind, Pryor went.

But the scene that met his gaze when he reached the top of the hill was entirely different from what he had expected.

Below was a long, narrow valley, with a river following its course. Straddling the river was a partly-constructed edifice of brick and stone, on which men were busily working. Great boxes of machinery stood about on the river-bank. Men, horses and motor-trucks were bustling about in what seemed at first glance hopeless confusion. Along both banks of the river gangs of men were setting up towering poles. A power-house was under construction.

Pryor stood for a long moment surveying the scene of industry to which he had been lured. The situation struck him as humorous. While running away from work he had run into it.

"Well," he told himself finally, "I guess there's no other way out of it. It's up to me to hit them up for a job."

A workman directed him to a tar-papered shack bearing the legend, "Belden & Co., Office." Two men within were bending over some blue-prints. One of them was tall and thin and stoop-shouldered, with sharp gray eyes. The other a short, heavy-set man with a bulldog cast of countenance. It was he who turned to Pryor, standing in the doorway, and shot the question—

"Well, what do you want?"

Pryor conceived an instant dislike for the man. Looking him in the eye, he replied—"I was thinkin' of offerin' my services for the advancement and progress of industry."

"Oh, you were, eh!" returned the other sarcastically. "If you're looking for a job why don't you say so?" It was very obvious that neither Pryor's appearance nor his words had impressed him very favorably. "What can you do?" he snapped.

"Anything," stated Pryor largely.

"We can't use—" began the other impatiently, when the tall man, evidently his superior, interrupted him with a "Go easy, Bradley," after which they exchanged a few low-voiced sentences, from which Pryor caught an odd phrase or two—"behind the schedule—short of men—overlook some things."

"All right," said the short man, turning again to Pryor. "We'll take you on. What's your name?"

Ten minutes later Pryor was trundling a wheelbarrow loaded with bricks, which he took from a pile along the riverbank and conveyed to the workers at the power-house.

A week passed. Pryor worked steadily and lived at the company bunk-house. On Saturday when he drew his pay he had an impulse to seek new fields, but on second thought decided to remain a week or so longer.

But it was not to be. Toward quitting time Wednesday afternoon Pryor was plodding along behind his barrow-load of bricks. The day had been almost unbearably hot and he was waiting with a dull impatience for the signal that would liberate him until the morrow. Just then Bradley, the foreman, happened along. He had been in a more surly mood than usual that day. Pryor had watched him snapping at his underlings with a mental resolve that he would not permit such conduct toward himself.

"What's the matter?" barked the foreman with a curse. "Afraid you'll hurt your lily-white hands? Go back there and get a man's size load on that wheelbarrow. And get a little more pep in your actions. This is no old ladies' home!"

Pryor stopped, lowered the barrow and turned slowly to the other.

"What are you kickin' about?" he gave back. "Do you know it was a little warm today, and that these blasted bricks weigh a ton apiece?"

The foreman sputtered with rage.

"Do as I tell you!" he yelled. "That's what you're getting paid for. Come on! Get a move on!"

"I'll be —— if I will," remarked Pryor evenly.

Bradley glared at him. "You won't eh? All right you're fi——"

"No, I'm not; I've quit, see? You can't fire me—I've quit."

"Good enough!" rasped Bradley, in a strangely altered voice, and walked rapidly away.

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Pryor watched him a moment, then picking up the handles of the wheelbarrow, finished his interrupted trip and headed for the office. The tall man, who was the superintendent, looked up from his work.

"I've come to get my pay," announced Pryor.

The other frowned.

"Got an order from the foreman?"

"No."

"Can't get your pay without one," in a tone of finality.

Pryor turned away, muttering a disgusted imprecation. After debating with himself whether it would be possible for him to approach the foreman again without "pokin' him one," he decided to chance it—not being especially averse, it is true, to such an outcome.

He found Bradley supervising the unloading of a truck.

"I want an order for my pay," he said abruptly.

The other affected not to hear him. Pryor repeated his request. The foreman turned on him with a sneering grin.

"Want your pay, do you? Well, you can't get it until pay-day, Saturday. That's the rule when men quit here. If you had been fired you'd get your money right away."

Pryor had time to place one healthy clout before several husky onlookers dragged him away.

A little later he stood on the station platform at Dunham City. His belligerent mood had given way to an intense feeling of restlessness. The old desire to roam was upon him strongly. He shook his fist at the deluding water-tank. Just then a freight train came into view and rumbled slowly past the station. Instantly he decided to board it. A moment later he was continuing his interrupted journey.

A hundred miles away the train reached its terminal in a hurrying, bustling city. Pryor was wandering aimlessly about when the specter of Work again appeared before him, embodied in the form of a worried-looking man who had a car of pig-iron to be unloaded that day without fail.

PRYOR set an exorbitant figure on his services, but help was scarce and the man was forced to accept. All day Pryor, in company with two others like himself, toiled and sweated under a blazing, merciless sun. When it was over he felt that he had thoroughly earned his price. That night, as he lay on his cot in a cheap lodging-house, a thought came to him that brought an oath to his lips.

In his unreflected departure from Dunham City he had given no thought to the collection of the wages due him. His desire to get away from the place had crowded all other things out of his mind. Now, at the thought of those uncompensated days of toil, he berated himself for several picturesque varieties of a fool.

Saturday afternoon he again arrived at Dunham City, via his usual means of transportation.

Being intent upon satisfying a well-developed appetite, he did not notice a little group of natives, some of them armed, conversing excitedly on the station platform; nor, as he hastened toward the lunch-car, did he see that there were unusual signs of activity on the ordinarily somnolent street.

He was meting out justice to a plate of ham and beans when two other customers drifted in and seated themselves in front of the counter.

" 'T's yours?" queried the listless waiter.

They gave their orders and as he set the stuff in front of them the waiter spoke again—

"D'they get the robber yet?"

"Nope, ain't got him yet, an' I guess they won't get him," replied one of the men judicially. "He's too slick, that feller. Ye heard how he got Bradley an' the clerk out o' the automobeel, didn't ye, Jake?"

The waiter said he hadn't heard.

"Well," went on the other, "Bradley an' the clerk was pikin' along 'bout thirty mile an hour. The money to pay them Belden fellers was in a satchel. A little past Mike Timmins's farm, where there's a lot o' trees along the way, they see what looks like a sack o' flour layin' in the middle o' the road. Nach'ly they stops. Bradley an' the clerk, not suspectin' anything, gets out o' the car. They was bendin' over the sack when this feller steps out from behind the trees and bangs the clerk on the head with a revolver. The clerk goes down. Bradley, bein' as you might say, taken by surprize, puts up a fight, but he gets a lick that puts him out o' the running. Then the hold-up man gets the money out o' the car and beats it."

The speaker paused and applied himself to the business of eating.

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"Did Bradley get a look at the guy?" asked the waiter.

"He had a handkerchief tied around his face, but Bradley thinks he knows who it was. He had a scrap with a guy a few days ago and the feller left without gettin' his pay. Heard Bradley say his name was Dyer or something. Sheriff's gettin' up a posse to hunt for him."

Pryor leisurely finished his meal, paid for it and passed out. Once on the sidewalk he became all alertness. This unexpected turn of events left him with but one thought, and that was to get away. He knew that it would be useless to stay and try to prove his innocence. By instinct he headed back toward the railroad. Unobserved he gained the shelter of a string of box-cars and struck out in the direction of the open.

Just as Pryor had begun to hope that he would get out of the town unmolested, the figure of a man appeared from behind the last car. He carried a rifle and wore a deputy's badge. They met face to face. Pryor was fairly caught. He made as if to pass, but the other, after estimating him with a keen glance, brought his rifle to bear.

"Hold on there!" he ordered.

In a flashing vision Pryor saw prison gates yawning open and clanging shut behind him. He acted with the quickness of desperation. His left hand struck the rifle to one side. Simultaneously his clenched right delivered a savage uppercut. The deputy wilted to the ground, senseless.

Pryor appropriated his rifle and cartridge belt and pulled the man out of the path of approaching trains. Then he made a rapid survey of his surroundings. No one was in sight. He started up the track at a dog-trot. But as he ran he realized that this would not do. It was broad daylight. He would inevitably be seen, and he felt that every man's hand was against him.

To the right, a short distance from the railroad, there was a lonely house that bore the unmistakable signs of abandonment. Broken shutters hung crazily from the gaping, pane-less windows. There were no doors. The house was hemmed in by tall weeds and grass, which were succeeded on three sides by woods. To avoid leaving a too-obvious trail through the weeds, Pryor entered the woods and circled around to the rear of the house, entering from there.

Inside it was damp and musty. The floors were rotten and insecure, and the plaster was crumbling from the walls. Dust and cobwebs were everywhere. Pryor made his way to the front of the house. A staircase ascended from a short hall. Picking his way up the uncertain steps he reached the second floor, where the decay was as yet a trifle less marked. He pulled a rickety chair to a front window and, concealed from view by a segment of shutter, sat there overlooking the quiet country and waiting phlegmatically for nightfall.

As he waited he reflected on his situation. It was not very encouraging. The circumstances of his leaving the construction company's employ gave color to Bradley's tale of having recognized Pryor in the perpetrator of the robbery. Until the latter was brought to justice Pryor was a marked man. It was easy enough to fasten the guilt on a homeless wanderer.

He would have to avoid capture—that was clear. Which meant that he would have to discontinue, temporarily at least, his drifting from town to town. After some thought he decided the safest plan would be to lose himself in the mountains until the hue and cry had died down. He was not unacquainted with the ways of the woods. In other days he had spent much time in them; fishing, hunting or just roaming about. He would take sanctuary there.

The few remaining hours of daylight dragged by uneventfully. Then came twilight and after that the utter blackness of a moonless night. But his wait was not yet over. More slow hours passed before he saw in the distance the faint reflected glow from a fire-box and heard the laboring of a giant engine. Then with the aid of matches he found his way out of the house and retraced his circuitous path to the railroad.

It was a slow train, all loaded freight and coal cars, and he boarded one of the latter with little difficulty. The miles rumbled by. In the early dawn he left the train and struck off up a road leading to the right. After walking for an hour he found an old barn and going inside slept until noon, after which he continued on his way until he came to a small village.

Hiding the rifle in some branches, he walked boldly up the main street until he came to the usual general store. Fortunately the place was deserted except for a young girl clerk. Pryor purchased some simple cooking-utensils there. In another village some miles farther on he bought a

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stock of supplies. Having satisfied his hunger, he struck off across the fields and woods until he again reached the railroad.

This he followed for the rest of the afternoon, hiding upon the approach of trains, to prevent the possibility of being seen and reported by train crews. With the approach of dusk he plunged into the forest to the left of the railroad.

For two days he pushed on, encountering no one. It was a wild, broken country of deep gorges and precipitous mountains. At the top of the highest of these he found the shack. It was a roughly built affair of crude-hewn logs and had evidently been long unoccupied. There were two bunks at opposite sides of the room, a table in the center and a few chairs. A fireplace was built into the back wall. From some odd bits of débris lying about Pryor drew the conclusion that the place had been used by hunters.

He established himself there. From the clearing in front of the shack there was an excellent view in three directions. The previous occupants had left a few old magazines and a thumb-worn book or two. When not engaged in his indifferently successful hunts for game, he would sit in front of the hut and read. He had never done much reading before and he turned to it now purely because there was nothing else to do. Much that he read was beyond him, but he grasped enough to kindle a strong curiosity. Here was an undreamed of profusion of the new fields he had always sought.

SO THE days passed and then came Fanning. Pryor was returning from a fruitless attempt at replenishing his fast-emptying larder when the man came into view. At first he had taken him for one of the pursuing party, but a closer view had disclosed a resemblance that awakened a memory of a previous incident —a memory that caused Pryor, sitting there fingering his rifle to take a certain object from his pocket and eye it for a moment with a grim anticipation.

As he came up over the edge of the clearing the newcomer caught sight of Pryor. He stopped, a startled surprize written plainly on his features. Then he recovered himself and came forward.

"Hello," he said genially. "I didn't expect to find any one away up here." He drew out a large, red handkerchief and mopped his florid face. "Hot day," he offered, with a rising inflection designed to draw forth conversation.

"Some," agreed Pryor, his mild gaze straying over the other's features.

The man cast a look in the direction from which he had come.

"I'm all in," he confided, turning again to Pryor. "Been hiking through this blasted wilderness two days. Hard work for a man that's not used to it. And lonesome! Haven't seen a soul since I started."

"It ain't crowded in through here, that's a fact," observed Pryor, noting that the other's eyes were close-set and calculating and did not jibe with the bluff heartiness of his manner. "How did you find your way up here?" he asked after a pause.

"I'm looking for a place to camp," the man explained. "A place where it's cool and quiet and the air is good. This mountain looked as though it would fill the bill, so I came up."

Pryor appeared to be digesting this information.

"Well, there's lots of quiet places around here, if that's what you want," he said finally.

The other cast him a keen glance.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Do you mind if I stop here a while and rest up?"

"Go to it," said Pryor.

The man seated himself on the bench with an exhalation of relief. He fanned himself with his hat. Pryor marked it as significant that he seemed to give no thought to the comfort of the mule.

After a while the man spoke again.

"You've got a strategic position here," he said. Then, noting Pryor's inquiring look, he hastened on: "Can't be taken by surprize, I mean. It would take an Indian to get up here without being seen."

"I'm not looking for any Indians or any one else to try it," returned Pryor in a careless tone. "No reason for any one to sneak up here without being seen."

"Of course not," said the other easily. "The thing just struck me that way, so I mentioned it. Any game in this region?"

"I've seen some pheasant and partridge, a rabbit or two," Pryor told him. "That's about all, and they seem to be scarce. Ever do any hunting?"

"Why—ah—a little."

A worried frown appeared on the man's

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face. He seemed to be turning something over in his mind. Pryor gazed speculatively at the burden on the mule's back. What was the man doing there? Why had he come that far in search of a camp-site? Why had he taken to the mountains at all?

In spite of his woodland garb he was unmistakably of the city. His actions, his speech, his manner showed that. He had said that he was looking for a place where the air was good and it was quiet. The story had a hollow ring. He was obviously not of the type to willingly seek a protracted period of solitude.

Another thing: what was behind his remark about the strategic location of Pryor's place? What was he driving at? But above all, had Pryor's recognition of him been correct? He was almost sure of it. But he wanted to know beyond the shadow of a doubt. He studied the man out of the corner of his eye. There was a bulge in the man's hip pocket that was suggestive. What did that mean?

Then the other broke in upon Pryor's reflections.

"Guess it's about time to eat," he remarked with a perfunctory look at his watch, "and I've got an appetite."

"I'm beginning to feel that way myself," said Pryor as they both rose.

This would give him an opportunity to find the answer to some of the questions that were in his mind. He went inside and started a fire and put some coffee on to boil. With the addition of some supplies which the newcomer unloaded from the mule's pack they prepared an eminently satisfying meal. Except for an occasional short remark they ate in silence. Pryor watched the other closely. Underneath the man's mask of good humor there glittered a cold insidious cunning. He ate voraciously in the manner of a glutton.

Evidently he sensed the thought in Pryor's mind, for as he attacked his third generous helping of bacon he remarked, smiling in the way he had, with the lower part of his face—

"That's my greatest weakness—never know when I've had enough to eat."

Words leaped to Pryor's lips, but he restrained them. It was not yet time. When they had finished Pryor cleared the table of its simple utensils and they sat in front of the shack and smoked their pipes.

It was very high, where they were, and still, giving a sense of isolation from the rest of the world and its hectic hurry. The sun had dropped over the rim of the farthermost hills and a peaceful twilight enveloped everything.

Fanning, as the newcomer had given his name, removed his pipe from his mouth and spoke.

"I begin to see why you asked me how I found my way up here," he observed. "It is a fact that there are any number of places in this region where a man who wanted to—ah—to be far from the madding crowd, as it were, could find seclusion, and safety from people who might be interested in seeing him."

Pryor puffed a leisurely succession of blue smoke rings into the still air.

"Meanin'?" he queried casually.

"Let's lay our cards on the table," said Fanning. "I was in Dunham City a few weeks ago. The whole town was excited over the robbery of a construction company's payroll, which had just occurred. Seems that one of their employees, a man who had been working for them a short time, and was fired for some reason or other, had held up a company car and got away with a big bundle of the filthy. According to his description in the local paper he is a man of medium height and weight, with blue eyes and brown hair, and——"

"Hold on!" cut in Pryor sharply. "I know what you're drivin' at. The description fits me. And a thousand other men. But the man that did it got away clean and they had to have a goat. A few days before, I had a scrap with the foreman and left without gettin' my pay. I'm just a drifter, a bum, so they hung it on me. You know what chance I would have had if I had stayed! So I shoved out."

"Sure, I know," soothed Fanning, in a "that's-what-they-all-say" tone. "I'm not here to enjoy the scenery myself. But I'd rather see blue sky than blue uniforms, and the cops in several cities are anxious to have me explain why a lot of people who bought oil stock of me are not buying midnight oil to figure out their income-tax returns. So you see, we're in the same boat. We've both got to lay low for a time. Suppose we get together? I've got the supplies and you've got the place. What do you say?"

Pryor expectorated thoughtfully. So that was it! An oil-stock swindler. Most likely a despoiler of the weak and the poor.

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It all fitted together nicely. He experienced a feeling of savage joy.

"Well, I'll tell you, Fanning," he drawled, "I was gettin' along all right before you appeared. Although I see you don't believe it, still I'm not the man who took the Belden people's jack. But if they don't get the fellow who did, I don't mind sayin' that I've got no way of provin' my innocence."

"But——"

"That means that I can't afford to take any chance of gettin' caught."

"But what has that to do with——"

"A lot. If the bulls come up here lookin' for you, they'll nab me too."

"They won't think of looking for me outside of civilization," said Fanning with a hard smile. "And if they should, I've covered up my tracks too well for them to get on my trail. As for that, what you say works both ways—whether you're guilty or not, you're the man they want, and I'm taking the same chance you are."

"That's right," concurred Pryor with a sober face. "I didn't think of that." He pulled away at his pipe for a while, then whirled suddenly on the other. "Look here!" he exclaimed. "How do I know you're not the man who pulled off that payroll stunt?"

Fanning was genuinely surprized.

"Why, Great Scott, man, that's ridiculous!" he sputtered. "I wouldn't suggest coming in with you if I were."

"Forget it," said Pryor in a conciliatory manner. "I didn't think so, anyway. I can see that's not your game. No, that's not your game," he repeated musingly.

Fanning eyed him with a perplexed and troubled gaze.

"Well, of course, if you don't want me here—" he began slowly.

"I didn't say so, did I?" interrupted Pryor. "Just wanted to know whether you're tryin' to put something over on me, that's all."

"——, no!" ejaculated Fanning with a sort of desperate earnestness. "What could I put over on you? As I said before, we're both in a bad fix. We're outcasts, fugitives—hunted men. Every man is our enemy. I tell you, we've got to stand together if we want to stay outside of a jail!"

Pryor smiled a bit, unseen by the other in the thickening darkness.

"They do say two heads are better than one," he observed in a friendly tone.

"Certainly!" cried Fanning. "That's the idea. It's the logical thing to do. And you can trust me, you may be sure of that. I have as much at stake as you have. Good Lord, yes!"

"Things must have been pretty hot to make you hit for the woods," said Pryor, as if to corroborate the other's argument.

"Hot! Believe me, they were! I'm a city man—been one all my life. Crowds, noise, jazz, that's the life I'm used to. But when matters came to such a pass that I was dodging detectives every time I moved I decided a change of atmosphere would do me good. So here I am."

Pryor made a perfunctory remark, after which they lapsed into silence. An hour passed and still they sat there staring into the primeval night. A light wind stirred sibilantly among the trees. There was no other sound.

An unsteady laugh came at last from Fanning.

"Gad, this confounded quiet is getting on my nerves," he muttered.

"Let's turn in," said Pryor.

Early the next morning the latter awoke. For a moment he stood over Fanning, who slept heavily, making unpleasant, rasping noises. Then he picked up his rifle and a pail and went out, intending to go for water at a spring part way down the mountain. At the door he stopped, a thought occurring to him, and reentered. A glance assured him that the other still slept. He stepped quietly about the cabin, fixing in his mind the details of its appearance and the position of every object it contained.

He gave especial attention to such spots as would suggest themselves for hiding-places or receptacles for secreted objects. Then he went out into the crisp, clean morning air and made his way down to the spring. He was in no hurry. After performing his ablutions he sat down in a little grassy spot and smoked his pipe. He was curious to know what Fanning would do when he found himself alone up there. Though he saw no reason to doubt his story, he placed no reliance in the man himself. He sat there, looking down the mountain, and waited.

WHEN Pryor returned, carrying the brimming pail, Fanning was busied with a bungling attempt to prepare breakfast. They exchanged a few commonplace phrases. Pryor glanced

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sharply about. It was plain that during his absence the place had been thoroughly searched. Some dust had been disturbed here, a board had been moved there. He suppressed an exclamation of contempt. Fanning, being without faith himself, was not able to credit another with the quality. Unwilling to believe that Pryor had not committed the crime with which he was charged, he had tried to locate the money, presumably with the intention of making off with it whenever their enforced exile would be ended.

After breakfast Pryor announced that they would have to go out and try to shoot something. When the other protested that they had enough supplies to last for some time, he answered that the way they were eating they would be flat in a week. Fanning took the hint and they started.

They went down the mountain and turned off to the right up the ravine, which at its upper end broadened out fan-shape. Skirting the base of a wooded hill, they veered to the left. Thus they plodded on, for the most part silently, Pryor a step or two in the lead, picking their course. A twisting, turning, confusing course it was, over and around mountains, through gullies and ravines and occasional forested plateaus.

Now and then Pryor would beckon his companion into immobility and his rifle would crack with startling loudness. Always without result. He was shooting merely to allay any suspicions that might have formed themselves in Fanning's mind. The latter, however, followed patiently along, seemingly unsuspecting and confident that Pryor knew what he was about.

Toward noon they halted by the side of a blustering little mountain stream. Pryor built a small blaze and prepared a meal from the stuff they had brought along. After they had satisfied their hunger they sat on the ground with their backs against the trunk of a fallen tree.

Pryor applied a match to his pipe.

"We've covered some distance this morning," he said casually. "Think you could find your way back?"

Fanning considered a moment.

"No, I don't think I could," he admitted frankly. All this scenery looks alike to me. I'll leave the pathfinding to you. You're the doctor."

"What would you have done if you hadn't run across me yesterday?" queried Pryor again.

"Oh, I guess I'd get by some way," said the other carelessly.

"That's what you thought when you came up here," observed Pryor deliberately. "You figured on puttin' one over on the bulls by comin' up here in the mountains. But after you had been trampin' along for a few days you got kinda leery of it. Too lonesome for one thing. And too uncomfortable, without a nice soft bed to crawl into at night, and no hot and cold water.

"But the main thing was you began to worry about runnin' out of grub. You're a good eater, and you realized that in a few weeks your supplies would be cleaned up and you wouldn't know how to get any more without goin' to town and bein' nabbed. You didn't like the idea of goin' hungry, so you wanted to tie up with some one that knows the woods. Can't say that I blame you for that—I know what it is to go hungry myself."

He picked up a few pebbles and tossed them one by one into the boisterous water of the creek, watching the miniature geyser that arose after each. Fanning studied him uneasily, wondering what significance lay behind the other's mild tones. He opened his mouth to speak, but thought better of it and remained silent.

"Yes, I've been hungry—lots of times," Pryor began again. "I've drifted around a lot. Been in a great many places, never very long in one place, though. That's my nature. Sometimes I have more, and sometimes less. When I'm broke I go to work, and when I'm flush I take it easy. But there's one thing I won't do and that's panhandle. I tried it once and that cured me. I drifted into a certain town one day last Winter. It was in the middle of January, and cold enough to freeze the ears off a brass monkey. I was hungry and broke. Hadn't had a square meal in—well, you wouldn't believe it if I told you how long.

"I tried to get a job—any kind of a job, but there was nothin' doin'. Walked around all afternoon without findin' anything. Maybe they didn't like my looks. That might be. As long as their own bellies was full.

"Well, it got dark, and colder. I sure needed something to eat bad. I was hungry enough to do —— near anything to get some chow. I happened to be wanderin'

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along a street with a lot of bright lights when I saw a man come out of a hotel smokin' a cigar. He was well-dressed, had a fur collar on his overcoat and seemed pretty well satisfied with himself and the whole world.

"I figured he had just finished a good meal, so I went up to him and tackled him for a quarter to get a bite to eat. He looked me over and turned away with a sneer. Then he seemed to think of something. He turned to me again, searchin' in his pockets.

"'Here,' he says, tossin' me a coin, 'take this.'

"I felt pretty good. It was more than I expected. I wanted to thank him, but he was gone in the crowd.

"Yes sir, I felt pretty good. I began to think maybe it wasn't such a bum world after all. Right away I hustled off to find a cheap beanery, where you don't have to pay for fancy trimmin's that you can't eat. I wanted to get all I could for my money, and I'm tellin' you I needed it.

"I didn't find the kind of a joint I wanted right away. Had to go five or six blocks. By the time I did find it I was gettin' light in the head on account of the cold and nothin' to eat for so long. But I perked up some when I got inside. It was warm and had a nice smell of coffee and fryin' stuff.

"I ordered a bowl of soup, some ham and eggs, French-fried potatoes, coffee and pie. It seemed like it took the waiter a year to get the order ready. But I didn't mind it so very much because I had a chance to get warm. Finally he put the stuff on the counter. That waiter was a hard nut with a fishy eye. I guess he thought I didn't have any jack, or else I looked like I might cave in before I put the eats away. I was feelin' pretty groggy at that. He figured up how much I owed him."

Pryor paused to knock out his pipe, and then resumed:

"That ham and eggs and the rest of it sure did look good. It was a shame not to eat it."

"What do you mean—didn't you eat the meal?" queried Fanning wonderingly.

"No, I didn't eat it."

"Then you did cave in?"

"No—that is, not just then."

"Well, what happened? Did you lose the money?"

"Lose it! Would I be likely to lose it?"

They looked at each other. Moments passed. And then, suddenly, understanding flamed with a craven light in Fanning's eyes. He paled, and gasped out a terrible oath. His right hand darted to his hip pocket. With a cat-like spring Pryor launched himself at the other, clutching at his gun hand. There was a furious, silent struggle. Fanning's revolver went off harmlessly. The desperation of fear was in his heart and the man fought like a tiger.

But Pryor, though of slighter build, was in somewhat better condition than his adversary, and was not to be denied. With a dexterous movement he twisted the other's arm behind his back, pushing the wrist up until the gun dropped from Fanning's nerveless grasp.

A moment later the revolver was in Pryor's possession and he was covering his beaten and cursing opponent.

"So you remembered me at last, eh?" he taunted. "Never thought there would be a come back to your little joke, did you? I wasn't likely to forget it, though! Now, Mr. Fanning, you're going to get a taste of your own medicine. You're going to be hungry, —— hungry. Here, take this and get out!"

Something round and flat, like a dollar, struck the stones at Fanning's feet. It fell with a dull, heavy thud. It was lead.

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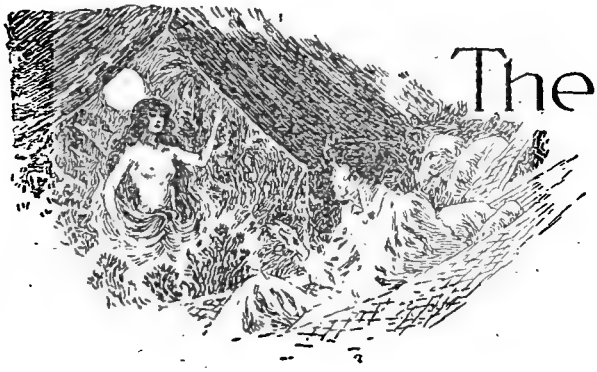

The BOUTO*

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Arthur O. Friel

Author of "The Barrigudo," "The Tailed Men," etc.

NO, *SENHOR*, that loud snort which sounded from the river just now was not made by an alligator. I do not wonder that you thought so, for this upper Amazon is full of alligators big and small—*jacaré uassú*, *jacaré tinga*, *jacaré curúa*, and others not so common—and the alligator, like other beasts, has his night call. But the sound which you heard was made by a river-animal far more graceful and less dangerous—a dolphin.

Look! Over there you can see its back fin glisten in the moonlight. Ah, it is gone. It has dived, and by the time it rises again this steamer will be so far down-stream that we shall see it no more.

What is that? You would like to take a shot at one? If you will pardon me, I would urge you to do no such thing. You might be so unfortunate as to kill it with your heavy bullet. Have not you and your companion learned, while exploring our Amazon headwaters, that to kill a *bouto* is bad luck?

Indeed it is true, *senhores*. Every one on the river knows that. If you do not believe it, tell some Indian that you want dolphin-oil to burn in your lantern and that you will pay him well to harpoon one for you. He will answer that blindness creeps on those who use the oil of the *bouto* for light, and that even worse fortune falls on him who slays the fish.

He may tell you, too, the legend of the Bouto Woman, which you perhaps have heard before. No? At our river-towns the tale is told that sometimes the *bouto* turns itself into a handsome girl whose hair is so long that it sweeps on the ground behind her when she walks. Leaving the water at night, she strolls about until she meets a man. She smiles on him and coaxes him to walk down to the river-side, saying that there they will be alone. And if he goes with her he goes to death. For at the edge of the water she seizes him around the body and leaps with him into the flood, and he is gone for all time.

Yes, it is an odd tale, as you say. But, *senhores*, an odd story is not always untrue. I will not say that I believe the *bouto* itself does this, yet—well, you North Americans have a saying, have you not, that "where there is smoke there is fire"? And queer things sometimes come about on this Amazon of ours and on the jungle rivers which flow into it—happenings which the great world outside never knows. I myself, a rubber-worker of the Javary region, have seen some such things. And now that we speak of the Bouto Woman I can tell you of something which I saw not very long ago.

THE great annual flood, which turns nearly one-third of our Brazil into a vast tree-choked sea, was nearly at its end. Indeed, the flood itself was long past, and in many places the wet land had risen once more above the water. To me and my comrade Pedro, urging our canoe northwestward through the jungle toward the river Tecuahy, this reappearance of the muddy earth was both welcome and unwelcome. Welcome, because it meant that the time was near when we could return to our rubber-work in the forests of old Coronel Nunes and earn more money. Unwelcome, because we had not yet reached the river

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we sought, and the rising of the thick bush from under the flood had made our travel slower and harder.

We had been on a long journey to the upper reaches of the river Jurua, off to the southeast—a trip with which our work for Coronel Nunes had nothing to do, for it was made in the time of high water when neither we nor any other men could labor in the flood-swept lowlands of his *seringal*. We had gone in burning rage and hate to avenge the death of another *seringueiro* captured and tortured by a tribe of beast-men—and we had avenged it well. Then, drifting down the Jurua while I recovered from a wound, we had at length turned off westward on a flood-channel through the forest, hoping by this to return to the Tecuahy and then go down that river to the Javary town of Remate de Males, whence we had started.

On this channel, which we never had seen before, we had met with delays. Most of them were due to losing our way, but a few had arisen from more serious causes. The latest of these was an attack of malignant fever which had struck my partner suddenly and nearly swept him across a river wider even than this Amazon—the river which runs between the worlds.

But he had been saved by a white medicine-man who was at once the ruler and the prisoner of an Indian tribe; and when Pedro was strong again this man had arranged our escape and himself fled with us to a wandering river running northeast, where he had left us and struck off alone toward civilization. And now, days later, we were still driving our canoe onward, guiding ourselves by the sun and holding as true a course as we could in the maze of thick bush and blind channels.

At length, late one day as we were watching ahead for a place to make camp for the night, we saw rising ground at the right. We slowed and scanned it as our dugout floated by, but found that between it and us was mud too thin to walk on but too thick to paddle through. So we continued on, curving around a bend in the channel, until a sudden brightening of the light and widening of the water drew our eyes to the left. We found ourselves just entering a river.

"*Por Deus!* Have we reached the Tecuahy at last, Lourenço?" cried Pedro, both joy and doubt in his voice.

"It is time we did," I growled, squinting in the glare of the low sun on the wide water; "but from what I can see I fear it is not. It seems to run almost east."

"True. But this may be only a turn. Let us go down it and see."

He stroked hard and the canoe jumped. But after a swift glance at the sun I dug my paddle in deep and held back.

"Not today," I disagreed. "We must get ashore soon if we are not to be caught by black night. The sun is dropping fast."

He grumbled something, but he too began looking again at the right bank. Then he nodded sidewise and edged the bow shoreward. I swung the stern, and we floated into a little natural port. Above us were firm ground, tall trees, and only a little of the low bush growth.

Landing, we threw up a small *tambo* to keep off any night rain, slung our hammocks, built a fire and ate. Night fell. The sky was clear, but we knew the moon would be late, so, though we spoke of paddling down-stream a little way by moonlight, we decided against it. The river would not disappear over night, and we were tired. Before long we slept.

Bright moonlight, breaking through openings among the tree-tops and shining on my face, woke me. I blinked, glanced at Pedro, turned in my hammock and let my eyes droop again. But just as they were closing they flew open. Something had moved.

I had heard nothing except the usual nightly hammering chorus of frogs, seen nothing but the dark mass of jungle sprayed with moonlight. Yet something had come between me and the moon, for its light had dimmed. And as I lifted my head and peered toward it I started. Framed in the glare were a head and a pair of bare shoulders.

They did not move. They stood out against the moonshine as if they belonged to a dusky statue with a neck nearly as thick as its body. For minutes I hung there squinting at it, and it stared straight back at me. Then the moon, rising fast, rolled up past the gap at the back of the creature; the light became more evenly balanced, and the face and form of the fantom grew more distinct. And I was more astonished than before, for I saw that it was a woman.

A woman, quite young, but with the plump shoulders and full bosom of maturity. A woman whose hair hung unbound

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behind her to her waist, where it was looped around her body like a belt. I saw now that she was not thick-necked, for with the change in the light her face and throat glowed pinky-brown against that black cloud of hair which at first had made her look so misshapen. And as I continued to stare I found that she was far from bad-looking.

SHE smiled, lifted a hand, and beckoned. I dropped my feet to the ground and sat up. At my movement she turned and began to fade away into the murky bush, still beckoning. Profoundly puzzled, I arose and took a step toward her. And just then Pedro, lying back in the shadows, cried out.

He was still asleep, but struggling with a bad dream. At his smothered yell both the woman and I jumped. For an instant she poised as if startled. Then, with a swift movement, she was gone.

Pedro yelled again and awoke. Seeing me standing there, he snatched his machete and leaped up and at me.

"Drop it!" I snapped.

"Oh, it is you, comrade!" He laughed nervously. "I am not quite myself—I have just been fighting with some cannibals. Why are you up?"

"Because you were howling so hard that I was looking for a rope to choke you with," I grumbled.

"Sure you were not sneaking out to make love to some lady monkey?" he chuckled.

"Not to a monkey. But I might have gone walking with a handsome young woman if you had not scared her away."

He stared, then grinned.

"So you too were dreaming—a more pleasant dream than mine. Pardon me for waking you. Were you in Remate de Males, or back at your old home below Manaos?"

"Neither. I was here. And if I dreamed I am still asleep."

Again I looked out at the bush. The woman was not there. Pedro, wondering, said nothing, and I listened. As I was about to speak again I heard a slight splash. No further sound came.

"Did you hear that splash?" I muttered.

"Yes. A fish jumping."

"Perhaps. But it came from over yonder, not from the river. In the morning I shall explore this place."

With that I sat down and told him of what I had seen. He grunted in disbelief.

"Moonshine!" he scoffed. "I have heard that men with weak heads should not sleep in the moonlight. You say the moon was shining in your eyes when you awoke. Your mind is full of moonbeams and moon-dreams. Unless—" and he laughed again "—you had a visit from the Bouto Woman of the Amazon. If it was she, beware! You know what comes to men who follow her. Did her hair drag at her heels?"

"No, but it might have done so if she had let it down. It was wound around her waist and hips like a *tanga*. Laugh if you like, but this was no dolphin-woman. Besides, a dolphin turned to a woman would be black, unless it changed color as well as shape."

"But no, it would not," he disputed. "Some of our river-dolphins are entirely black, but others are black-backed and pink underneath, and some are pink all over. Have you never seen flesh-colored dolphins? They are not uncommon."

He spoke truth. It had been some time since I had seen a dolphin, and still longer since I had heard any one tell the tale of the Bouto Woman. Now, thinking about them there in the dark mystery of the jungle, I half-believed that the old legend might be true. But I said no more, and soon my partner lay down again.

"If your fishy lady comes back before dawn wake me," he yawned. "I should much like to see the famous Bouto."

And with another derisive chuckle he went back to sleep.

I lay awake for some time, listening to the night noises but hearing nothing strange. Several times I sat up and stared long at the place where that moon-born woman had stood. But whatever might have been there before, nothing human was there now. So at length I too drifted off to sleep.

Pedro's hand on my shoulder roused me. The sun was up in the sky, the smell of wood-smoke and boiling coffee was in the air and excitement was in my partner's face.

"Wake up, old lady-charmer, and receive my apologies," he said. "I knew well you were a fascinator, but I never suspected that fish would turn into women for your sake. The Bouto Woman was here last night! Come and see!"

A few feet east of our *tambo* he pointed to the ground. There in a soft spot was the print of a bare foot.

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TWE HAD worked barefoot in building our hut at sundown, but this track could not have been made by either of us. It was much too small. In another place a couple of yards farther off Pedro pointed out another footprint of the same size. Working back through the bush, he showed me more of them here and there. The trail brought us to water.

"This is an *enseada*—an inlet," he explained. "It must run in from somewhere down-stream. Your woman seems to have walked out along that fallen tree and plunged into the water. There is no track anywhere else along the shore."

As he said, the trail began and ended at the base of a tree stretching out into the quiet water. I stepped out along the floating trunk and on its rough bark I spied little dabs of earth scraped off the feet which had passed along it.

Fifty feet out from shore, at the point where the first branches jutted upward, I halted and scanned trunk and limbs. They showed no sign that a canoe had been tied there. And the *enseada* itself, as I looked along it, held no indication of life. The woman had come from the water and gone back to it, leaving nothing but a few scattered footprints.

"Before you jump in after her," Pedro called, "come back to the fire and have some breakfast."

"I am not jumping after her or any other woman," I retorted, turning toward shore.

And we hastened back to our boiling coffee.

When we had eaten and stowed our few belongings in the dugout we pushed off down-stream, keeping near the right bank. The hill on which we had camped stretched along the river for perhaps a mile, rising steep from the muddy waters and seeming unbroken by any cleft. Yet we had already found one dent in it—the small port where we had spent the night—and we looked for another opening where the *enseada* began. And before long we found it.

It was so narrow and so overgrown that if we had not been hugging the shore and watching for it we should have passed it without a glance. And even when we forced our way through the half-drowned bush choking it up we were not sure that it was what we sought, for it turned to the left and seemed to end. But as we paddled on we found that it did not stop there but looped sharply back around a point. Turning the point, we held our paddles and stared.

Before us rose a wall of thin, straight palm-logs standing on end in the water. The posts stood close together, yet not too close to let the water flow through between them. They were lashed to one another by loop after loop of tough woody vines and bush-rope, and the whole wall looked firm enough to last for a life-time. It extended up the steep banks on either side, rising to a height a little above the topmost flood mark. In it we could see no gate, and no path showed around either end. It seemed made to let water in but keep all else out.

"*Por Deus!*" Pedro said softly. "This is a queer thing to find in uninhabited jungle. No dolphin-woman made this, nor any other woman. It is the work of a strong man."

"I do not like it," I muttered. "It looks like a trap."

He nodded. But instead of answering he held up a hand for silence. Beyond the barrier sounded splashing.

Softly, silently, we stroked our canoe up to the poles. Pedro, in the bow, leaned forward and peered through one of the narrow openings.

"*Nossa Senhora!*" I heard him whisper. Then, turning his head and shielding his mouth with one hand, he added, "The Bouto!"

Quickly but quietly I worked my end of the boat around until I too could look through. And there in the water, some distance away but unmistakable, I saw the woman who had beckoned to me in the moonlight.

In truth, she seemed a dolphin woman. She was swimming and playing about with the smooth ease of a fish, disappearing sometimes below the surface, staying under until it seemed that she must have drowned, then gliding into sight again at some place a long way from the spot where she had vanished.

After floating quietly a moment she would splash water upward with both hands and go down backward, her feet kicking a white smother as they sank. And then we would see her pink toes peep out somewhere else, followed by her hands and then by her flushed face, above which her black hair was piled in a cone resembling a dolphin's snout.

She turned over with a gleam of sleek

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arms; she swam on her right side and then on her left; she even went feet first, her toes held above water. And we clung to the poles and marveled.

"She is better than the dolphin itself," Pedro murmured. "I have never seen a fish that could swim backward as she is doing."

It was not only her skill that held me quiet, however, but her fearlessness. Neither of us, though we could swim if we had to, would think of sporting about as she was doing—there are too many perils waiting for a swimmer in our waters. Alligators, huge water-snakes, bloodthirsty *piranhas*, barb-tailed *araya* devil-fish, electric eels which shock and stun, and other deadly creatures too foul for me to speak of—all these lurk under the surface that looks so harmless to a stranger, and we were too old in the ways of the jungle streams to expose ourselves to them. Yet this dolphin woman seemed to give them no thought, and she suffered no harm.

At length she tired of her play and came swiftly toward us in a final dash. Swerving toward the left bank, she reached upward and caught at something we had not noticed—a little platform on poles, like the *moutás* which our Indians set up in the waters of the jungle pools when shooting turtles. One of the posts supporting this was notched to form a ladder, and up these notches she climbed to the platform.

There she sat breathing a moment. Then she arose, unbound her cone of hair, pressed the water from it, and shook it loose to dry.

Senhores, that hair was longer than she herself. It hung down below the *moutá* on which she stood, and her head tilted backward a little as if drawn down by the weight of it. Against its blackness her face and figure glowed far more clearly than when I had last seen her, back in the dark jungle under the wan light of the moon. Plump, smooth-skinned, unclothed except for a tight-drawn *tanga*, glistening with the water-drops rolling down her shapely form, she still seemed the Bouto Woman of the old tale—a dolphin such as Pedro had mentioned, black of back and fair of body.

Yet her face, as she stood with chin upward and gaze fixed on the jungle beyond, did not seem that of a woman nimble-witted enough to lure men to destruction. Somehow it looked rather blank, and the eyes seemed to stare as unwinkingly as those of a fish.

A choking sound from Pedro drew my attention away from her. He was struggling to hold his breath. His effort failed. He burst into a snorting sneeze.

MUTTERING a curse, he looked again through the palm wall. So did I. The woman turned sharply toward us, watched the logs a moment and probably saw our canoe through the openings. With a leap she cleared the space between her platform and the land. There she stood still again, frowning. Then, instead of running away, she calmly came toward us.

While she was balancing herself along the abrupt slope we pushed the canoe to shore and waited. Her head rose over the wall and hung there, peering down.

"*Boa dia, senhorita*," Pedro greeted her. "I hope we have not disturbed you."

She made no answer. Her steady stare rested long on his face, then passed to mine. A slow smile came on her full lips, and I knew she recognized me. But still she did not speak. Presently a hand rose over the wall and beckoned. And the invitation was not to Pedro but to me.

I sat still, for this was most astonishing. Never before had a woman ignored my handsome partner for me. As you *senhores* can see for yourselves, I am so plain that women are not likely to notice me at any time, and certainly not when I am with such a tall, graceful fellow as Pedro. Now, with this attractive woman preferring me to him, I was as much surprized as if our canoe had suddenly grown legs and started to walk up the slope.

Watching me, she laughed quietly and continued to beckon. Pedro turned to me.

"Why do you not go?" he demanded. "Must your lady come down here and carry you? Use your legs."

I stepped out on the bank. But there I stopped, glancing again at the wall.

"Come with me," I said in an undertone. "As I said before, this place looks like a trap. Perhaps no harm is near, but we had best make sure. Here you are walled in on three sides, and the way out is not easy."

"So you think there may be a reason for trying to separate us?"

"I do not know. But I do know that two

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men can be killed more easily when apart than when together. And, as you have said, no woman built that barrier."

He nodded, fastened the boat to a post and followed me, rifle in hand. The woman frowned, but still said nothing. After a slippery climb up the bank we crossed the wall at the point where the last and shortest stakes joined the steep earth. By that time the woman had started away, and we trailed in her footprints, balancing ourselves with difficulty on the wet clay. When we came above the *moutá*, however, we found a path where the soil was packed into a narrow shelf, and from that point we trod more easily and could look at other things besides the ground.

The woman, I noticed, had again looped her hair around her waist. Then, as I glanced beyond her, I noticed something else. A couple of hundred yards farther along the ravine the top of another wall of poles showed above the water. Now I understood why the woman could swim here without fear.

Those barriers would keep out *araya*, *piranha* and all other evil creatures except those so small that they could do no serious injury. True, a great snake or alligator might come into the place from the land, but this was hardly probable. Walled in at both sides by abrupt declivities, barred at both ends by the posts, it formed a long pool where a good swimmer could play unharmed.

The path twisted upward and began to zigzag back and forth. We dug in our toes and mounted to the top. There, under big trees, the ground was nearly level and almost free of undergrowth. Still silent, we three walked onward to the base of a great prostrate *massaranduba* tree which at some time had come smashing down and which, though lying on its side, still loomed high over our heads.

We had seen such prone giants often before, and now we only glanced at it and would have passed on. But at a spot some ten feet beyond its towering roots the woman halted, pointed and stepped straight into the tree itself.

"*Por amor de Deus!*" exclaimed Pedro. "A house cut in the virgin wood!"

It was so. We stared at the strangest house we had ever seen. Above us that huge trunk rose for nearly twenty feet, and from its lower side had been hollowed a home about eight feet high and fifteen feet long. The enormous weight of the tree had driven its under side solidly into the soil when it struck, and the space between its lower curve and the ground had been filled in with smaller logs and clay, forming a nearly straight wall at each end of the cavity. From the roof to the earth an outer wall of small palm-logs had been built, with a window and a door. The inside of the place was very dark.

"No woman made this," I mumbled. "It took more than one man and many days of chopping."

"Perhaps not," he disagreed. "See how black the bark is at the ends and up above. It was not chopped out, but made as we make our canoes—burned out and then finished with the ax. One strong man could do it easily."

"True. But let us look at the man who made it."

Then, raising my voice, I called gruffly:

"Ho there! Come out!"

No one came out. The woman appeared in the window and stood there, a question in her face. No other creature showed itself.

"Is no man here?" I asked.

With her slow smile she shook her head. Her beckoning hand appeared at the window. And, as before, she motioned to me, not to Pedro.

"The strangeness grows," said my partner. "A woman who swims better than a fish is rare. A woman who lives alone in manless jungle is unheard of. But a woman who will not talk—it is a miracle!"

Without reply I walked in at the door, rifle ready. But no man lurking in the shadows menaced me. She had told truth—no man was there. Yet, as my eyes grew accustomed to the dimness, I saw that a man had been there. Not only one man, but three.

From pins in the wood wall hung the clothing of three men. And in a corner stood rusty rifles and machetes.

"Where are those men?" I demanded, pointing.

With a wave of the hand she signed that they had gone away.

Peering again at the rusty weapons, I thought their owners must have been gone for some time. And they had left clothes and guns behind.

"Are they dead?" I snapped.

She nodded.

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"How? What killed them?"

Her cool brown eyes did not waver—nor did she speak. Another calm movement of both hands and a shake of her head told me that she did not know how they had died.

HER unbroken silence irritated me. I asked rather sharply whether she had no tongue. Smiling again, she stuck out her tongue and wriggled it impudently at me. It looked as good as my own. I growled, seized her shoulder with my left hand and tried to scare her into speech.

"Talk, or I will thrash you!" I threatened, trying to look ugly and brutal.

It did no good whatever. She laughed in my face, lifted a hand, raised my fist with a smooth strength that astonished me—and then drew my arm down around her waist.

I twisted my hand free and stepped back hastily.

"Pedro!" I yelped. "Come in here!"

His chuckle sounded at the door.

"I have been watching," he told me. "But why call for me? She is yours without a struggle."

"Er—ah—look at those things!" I stammered, hot-faced, jabbing a thumb toward the weapons and clothes.

"Yes, I saw them. That was what brought me to the door—your question about men."

His face sobered and his eyes narrowed as he looked from the guns to the woman.

"What killed those men?" he barked.

She pouted, shook her head again and then motioned for him to go.

"Very well," I said. "We shall both go. *Adeos, senhorita.*"

But she caught my arm again and held it, and once more I was surprized by the power of her grip. As I paused she moved her mouth as if eating, then nodded to each of us in turn.

"Yes, we will eat with you if you like," I consented. "But I stay in no place where my partner is unwelcome."

She released my arm, pointed to a hammock slung against the far wall and motioned for us to rest there. Then from a stool under the window, where we had not observed them, she picked up a pair of trousers with belt and machete. Stepping into these, she buckled the belt around her and started out.

"A queer way to prepare a meal for visitors—to strap on a machete and leave them," Pedro remarked.

"This whole matter is too queer to suit me," I said. "I am going with her to watch her. Stay here and look over those guns—and anything else you see. Our tongues and ears are useless, so we must depend on our eyes."

And out I went after her.

She was walking along the trunk of the *massaranduba*. I made no attempt to sneak and spy, but followed openly. She looked back, waited until I reached her, then went on toward the head of the tree, glancing at me now and then in a way which was neither bold nor shy but very friendly. As I usually do when with women, I kept my mouth shut. And thus, wordless, we passed around the great sprawling tree-top and walked on into the forest beyond.

Past other tremendous trees, towering so high that their heads were lost beyond the roof of branches above us, we went. Around a dense mass of thorny bamboos we made a circuit, and then we came among trees of medium height, corded and draped with vines, which hung from above and mingled with other vines matted on the ground. Here the woman slowed and looked searchingly at the vines. Presently she stepped to a liana, drew her machete and cut off a piece about a yard long. With this in her hand she turned toward the *enseada*.

Down the bank, which here was far less steep than at her swimming-place, we went to the edge of the water. There, concealed in a small hollow, lay a short canoe in which was one paddle. Entering this and lifting the paddle, she motioned for me to squat in the bow. I did so, facing her.

She pushed the craft out, turned it to her left and sent it gliding down the inlet. Around a double curve we floated. Looking over one shoulder, I saw that the *enseada* now became wider and straighter; and a gunshot beyond us I spied a tree lying far out in the water, its butt on shore. Studying it, I knew it was the trunk on which I I had walked out that morning, trailing this woman.

We did not reach that tree. She swung the canoe into a small cove at the left, and we got out on shore. There she held the piece of vine against a tree, pounded it with her machete until it was well mashed up and

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threw it out into the still water of the cove. After that she sat down at the base of the tree and motioned for me to sit beside her.

More puzzled than ever, I scowled at her and at the crushed vine. The vine floated almost motionless, and the dark water around it looked slightly milky, as if some whitish juice from the wood were soaking out of it. As I looked back at her she raised a hand toward the sun, moved it a little westward, dropped it and pointed at the drifting vine, lowered it again to the place beside her. I took this to mean that in about half an hour the vine would do something, and that meanwhile I was to keep her company.

So I squatted against the tree—not so close to her as she had indicated—and made a cigaret, which I offered to her. She took it, and when I had rolled another I lit them both. She puffed at hers as if she had smoked before, but not recently. And then for a while we sat there burning tobacco.

WHILE I sucked smoke I remembered that we had not given her any account of ourselves. Perhaps if I did so she would break her stubborn silence. So I told her my name, where we worked, and as much of our recent history as seemed best. Her eyes showed interest, but she never spoke. And when I questioned her as to who she was, whence she came, and how long she had lived here, into her face came that blank look I had noticed before, and she stared straight before her.

Then she leaned forward, looking at the water. There on the placid surface was something more than the vine—the glistening side and light belly of a small fish.

Its gills were wide open, and it seemed dead. I was quite sure that it had not been dead long—some other creature would have devoured it. And in another few minutes I became certain of this. Without splash or struggle, three more fish came drifting up from the depths. And, one by one, others appeared here and there on the surface. And not one moved so much as a fin.

The woman rose and stood looking them over. None was large, but there were enough to make a meal—if they were fit to eat. Yet she stood quiet as if waiting. And before long the water showed its first sign of life. Wriggling weakly, a fine big *pescada* came up, gasped a few times and was still.

At sight of that creature I sprang up, thinking only of getting him before he should give a twist of his tail and disappear. Then I stopped short as the meaning of it all flashed on me. The woman was fishing with the *timbo*.

I had heard of this before, but never had seen it. The *timbo* is a poisonous liana, and if it is crushed and thrown into still water its juice will stupefy and kill the fish near it. Yet the flesh of the fish is unhurt—the creature seems to be stifled rather than poisoned—and it can be eaten without harm. And there was no need for me to hurry about capturing that *pescada*, for he never would move again. He was as dead as if his back-bone had been severed.

With a motion of the head the woman stepped into the canoe, and I followed. A few strokes brought us to the *pescada*, and I lifted him in. The dugout moved around among the other fish, and I spied a couple of rather small *tucunarés*. These also I gathered up. The rest we left behind us.

Around the double twist in the winding water we returned to the little cove and thence to the dug-out house. When we entered it Pedro was lying lazily in the hammock, seeming half-asleep.

"Our friend is a witch," I told him with a slight wink. "She dropped a vine on the water and the fish arose to feed us. It is magic."

The woman looked pleased. He winked back to me. As she picked a small knife from where it stuck in the wall and went out again to clean the fish he swiftly arose.

"The men who died had money," he whispered in my ear.

Somewhat surprized, I glanced at the clothing on the wall. It looked as poor as our own. And my surprize almost became disbelief when he added—

"Twelve thousand *milreis!*"

"*Deus meo!*" I muttered. "Are you sure?"

"Sure. It is all in one great roll, tied with bush-cord, lying there in the corner under those rifles as if it were a mere lump of dirt. The guns are Winchesters, forty-four, such as we use. The machetes are Collins, like ours. The clothes are the same as we should wear. And I believe the men were *seringueiros* like ourselves."

"But three *seringueiros*—where would they get twelve thousand *milreis?*"

"Perhaps by gambling with others. Or

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perhaps more than three men have died here, and the guns and clothes of the rest are lost or thrown away. And—hush! Let us go outside."

We lounged out, meeting the woman coming toward us. She entered the place, but came out almost at once with a piece of that queer stony stuff which sometimes is found floating down our streams and which our Indians believe to be hardened river-foam*. We watched her return to her fish, lift the knife and scrub rust from the blade with the foam-stone. She gave us the same slow smile as she passed, and in her gaze we saw no suspicion.

Strolling idly away, we acted as if only looking about us. I noticed that between her house and the edge of the bank no small growth stood, and that we could see for some distance up and down the opposite hill-top. Perhaps the light of our small fire had glinted through the jungle last night and caught her eye, or its drifting smoke had been borne to her on a breeze, to arouse her curiosity and send her to spy on us as soon as moonrise gave enough light. We walked on until we could continue talking.

"Twelve thousand *milreis!*" I muttered. "And this woman led us straight to her house and left you, a stranger, there with that money while she went fishing with me. She certainly is not sly—at times she looks as if her mind slept—and yet she is not simple either. She shows us everything and tells us nothing. I can make neither head nor tail of it all."

"Nor I," he admitted. "What do you think her to be? White, or only partly white?"

"A *mamcluca*," I judged. "Like ourselves—white, with a little Indian blood. Beyond that I can not guess what she may be."

"We can only watch and wait," he said. "Asking questions is useless. Let matters shape themselves."

But as we idled back to her I thought of one question which she might answer, and which meant much to us. When we were beside her again I pointed toward the river and asked—

"Tecuahy?"

She nodded.

"Praise God!" I rejoiced. "Our fight with the bush is over. What part of the Tecuahy is this? Where does the Branco flow in—above or below here?"

At the word "Branco" she started. A sudden wild light flared into her eyes. Then she dropped her head and went on with her work.

WE GLANCED at each other. On the Branco, a river three hundred miles long which enters the Tecuahy from the west, are a few *seringales*. Where *seringales* are, there must be *seringueiros* to work them. The clothing and weapons—and perhaps the money—in her house were those of *seringueiros*.

We began talking of the Branco and of rubber-workers from there whom we had met at Remate de Males. But it did no good. She only arose, made a fire and began cooking the fish.

We shrugged our shoulders and gave it up. As Pedro had said, talk was useless.

While we ate of the fish—which she had cooked very skilfully—and while all three of us smoked again afterward, Pedro and I were as silent as the woman herself. I was puzzling, planning one way after another to solve the mystery, and throwing away each plan when it was made. My partner too was thinking; and so also, perhaps, was she, though neither her face nor her acts gave any sign of what passed in her mind.

The sun beat down fiercely, and the day grew sweltering hot. There under the big trees we should have been fairly cool; but no breeze moved, and the hot air from the sluggish river crept over the hill and around us like unseen steam. I wished we were out of the place and on our way down the Tecuahy. The wish brought me to a decision.

"We thank you for your hospitality," I told her. "We should much like to know more of you and be your friends. But since you will not talk to us, we are only wasting time. So as soon as it grows cooler we shall go."

Her eyes opened at that. She shook her head.

"Let us go now instead of waiting," said Pedro. "It can not be hotter on the river. What is the good of delaying here?"

The woman gave him a look of sullen anger. As we arose she also stood up. Again she shook her head. Then she smiled at both of us and moved her hands as if swimming.

*Pumice stone, water-borne from the Andes. Used by Brazilians to scour rust from metal.

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Now neither of us was a powerful swimmer, for, as I have said, we seldom swam because of the hidden dangers of the streams; but we could keep ourselves afloat well enough, and the thought of a cool swim in safe water struck us as pleasant. We agreed at once. She turned and led the way toward her enclosed bathing-pool.

"Do you really intend to go?" Pedro asked softly.

"I intend now to swim," I returned. "Perhaps when we have soaked our heads we can think of something. If not, we had best go."

And we followed the wordless woman on through the forest and down her zigzag path to the little *moutá*.

There she coiled up her hair, loosed her belt, dropped the trousers which probably had belonged to some *seringueiro* now dead, and stood in only that close *tanga*. As we were wearing nothing but tattered shirts and breeches, we had only to lay our weapons in the path, pull off our shirts, and jump to the *moutá*. As I landed on that little platform she left it in a graceful dive.

Her spring made the thing sway under me, and I tottered and nearly fell off it. And before it grew steady I did fall.

"Have care!" came Pedro's cry as he leaped from the bank.

I had just caught my balance when his weight struck the *moutá*. It wobbled violently, we grabbed each other, and then we tumbled sousing into the water.

When we came up, snorting and coughing, the woman was floating near by and laughing at us. We caught the posts and clung there, regaining our breath and grinning. She swam smoothly away, then went under and disappeared. While I was looking for her to come up beyond the spot where she had gone down, her head bobbed up almost in my face, startling me so that I nearly fell backward again. She had turned and come to me under the surface, and now she and Pedro both laughed at my sudden jump.

Feeling rather foolish, I let go my hold and struck out into the pool, enjoying its coolness and proving that I could swim. My strokes, I felt, were awkward compared to her easy movements, but I did not flounder. Behind me sounded a splash as Pedro also took to the water. I swam on until he caught up and passed me, when I turned back.

"Keep on!" he called. "I will race you to the other side."

But I was breathing a little hard, and as I now was nearer to the platform than he I panted:

"I will race you—to the *moutá!*"

Glancing back, I saw him swerve and knew he had accepted the challenge. So I began swimming my hardest. I beat him to the posts, but by only about two strokes; and the effort winded me. For that matter, it winded him too.

THE woman had climbed up the ladder-pole to watch us from the top of the little stage. Looking up, I found a queer expression on her face. For the first time since we had come, she looked crafty. But as she caught my eye the expression disappeared and she smiled that slow smile. Pointing to the opposite shore, she vaulted out and began swimming the instant she struck the surface.

In less time than it had taken us two clumsy men to swim half-way across and back, she reached the other side and returned to the posts where we rested. And in spite of her speed she was not gasping when she ended her trip—only breathing a little faster. She looked at me as if expecting praise; so I spoke the simple truth.

"You are a wonderful swimmer," I said. "I have never seen a woman swim so well."

"Nor any man either," added Pedro. "You are a fish—a real *bouto*."

She smiled at my compliment; but when he called her "*bouto*" she lost the smile. For a second I thought her eyes gleamed with the same wild light which had shone there when she heard the word "Branco." But it quickly died. She glanced up, then motioned for us to climb the ladder. We were quite willing to sit and breathe a while, so up we went. She followed.

While we sat and rested Pedro and I argued jokingly as to which of us was the faster in the water. He declared he could have won if I had not kicked so much water into his face. I replied that excuses did not win races. The woman leaned forward quickly—almost as if she had expected some such argument—and began to talk in her sign-language.

She pointed to the pole barrier at the farther end; then to me and to a point some twenty yards away; then to Pedro and to a place ten yards nearer; last to herself and

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the *moutá*. After that she moved her hands as if swimming, then swept one hand past us and again pointed to the poles.

"You will race both of us to that wall?" asked Pedro. "You will give my comrade a start of twenty yards, and me ten yards, and then beat us both?"

She nodded, teeth flashing and eyes alight.

"It is a long swim," he laughed, measuring the distance, "and I do not doubt that you can win. But you must swim to prove it. Lourenço, when she and I reach the poles I will come back to help you."

"Indeed?" I scoffed. "You will be much more than ten yards behind when I touch that wall. She may beat me, but you will not."

"You must swim to prove it," he repeated.

Without reply, I jumped off and headed for the wall.

Knowing that he would not start until I had gained my lead, I took my time. When I reached the ten-yard point I heard him splash in. I swam on, still slowly, until a second splash sounded. Then behind me came Pedro's shout:

"Swim! I am going to crawl right up your back!"

I grinned and struck out hard and fast.

The wall seemed very far away, but I knew Pedro was not much better at swimming than I, and I hoped to cover a good distance before being overtaken even by the dolphin woman. Once I looked back, finding that she already had gained on him, but that he was no nearer to me than before. Then I fixed my eyes on the wall and stroked onward without thought of anything except finishing the race as fast as possible.

Soon I was breathing hard. My legs began to feel a little tired. I wished I had done more walking lately, for many days of canoe travel had weakened me somewhat from the waist down. But the wall was growing larger, and still neither my comrade nor the woman had caught me. I began to think I might win over both of them. The thought gave me more power, and I struggled on faster than before.

Somewhere behind me sounded a gurgling gasp and a splash. I grinned again. Pedro had caught a mouthful of water, I thought, and would have to slow up. My arms were tiring now, but I still held the lead and I was determined to keep it if I could. I listened for other splashes which would show he too was tired, but none came.

Suddenly I felt that it was strangely still.

The thought drew my head around. I found myself alone. Both Pedro and the woman had gone down.

Instantly I swirled around and started back. The woman might be swimming under water, but Pedro would not; he could not hold his breath well enough. That gasp I had heard came back to me. Had Pedro drowned? Had they both drowned? Or was some monster here which had dragged them under to a death more frightful than drowning?

Madly I scooped water in my effort to reach the spot where my partner might be. I dropped my face and stared down, seeing only blackness. I lifted it again, gasped—and saw something ahead.

Something shapeless, something gone as soon as seen—a heel, an elbow, a clenched hand, perhaps—showed for an instant on the surface. I fought toward it. It disappeared before I reached the place, but I knew where it had been. Lowering my head again, I peered down as I swam. Just as my straining lungs made me raise my mouth for air I caught a glimpse of something below.

Snatching a deep breath, I put my face under the surface once more. Beneath me floated a pale shape, moving very feebly. Something else seemed to be with it. I did not waste time in watching it. With all my power I threw myself down to the dying thing.

I LOOKED into the swollen face of Pedro, staring upward with eyes that saw nothing. And as I grabbed at a limp arm I saw another face just below his. It, too, seemed swollen, but its eyes were alive. In them was a chill glare that was horrible to see. For a second it struck me cold, that awful face under him. Then I yanked at the arm I held and started clawing my way upward.

The terrible face moved away from him. An arm fell away from around his throat. A light body darted away and swiftly rose. Pedro too rose, and, strangling from pent breath, I broke out into the sun and air.

Another head was near me on the surface, its mouth open and gasping like mine. It was that of the woman. As I got my wind and turned to support Pedro's face above

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water she came at us both. I looked again into the glaring eyes I had seen under water —eyes agleam with murder. A hoarse, horrid sound came from her—a sound like a killing animal of the jungle. She was Death.

Pedro's arm moved a little in my clutch. I pulled him to one side, away from the woman, and stroked hard with my free hand. She came on, reaching for him and for me. Turning again, I stabbed my open hand at her, intending to shove her away. I did not quite reach her. But my hand, striking along the surface, spurted water into her face just as she drew breath. She choked, coughed and stopped.

At once I was off again, striking for the nearest bank and towing Pedro, who was still trying to swim. Thrashing along through the ripples, nearly exhausted, I had gone several yards when something under me clutched at one ankle.

The clutch missed, but it threw me into blind panic. Pulling up my legs, I kicked backward and down with all my force. One heel struck violently against something. I kicked again, but felt nothing. And then somehow I got myself and Pedro to the land.

Just above the water's edge was a small hollow in the bank, and I managed to climb into it and haul Pedro out. Then I fell, totally exhausted. For a few minutes I lay recovering some strength, Pedro lying across me, quivering and moaning and weakly belching water. When I was able to sit up his eyes showed that consciousness was coming back to him. I got to my knees and worked on him until he could breathe without choking.

While I helped him I looked around repeatedly for the woman, but saw her nowhere. If she had swum ashore she had done it quickly and quietly. I remembered our weapons, lying back there in the path by the *moutâ*, and wished they were nearer. If that deadly woman got our guns she could come along the top of the bank and shoot us like cornered rats.

So, seeing that Pedro was in no further danger of suffocation, I scrambled up the bank to the top and ran to the *moutâ*. Our guns, machetes, and shirts lay in the path as we had left them. The footprints in the path, too, all pointed toward the platform. Nobody had come up there since we three had gone down it together. And nowhere along the *enseada* could I see any person.

Back along the path I went with our belongings until I was above Pedro. There, as I stood looking down at the pool where we had just fought for life, I thought of the clutch at my ankle, remembered the thing I had kicked so hard—and I saw something. Down there in the darkness something light showed; something which seemed only a paler shadow than the rest, but which might be——

I slid down to my comrade. He was sitting up against the clay, looking weak and wan, but alive and awake.

"Where is she?" he whispered.

"I am afraid," I answered soberly, "that she is out there. I am going to see."

You can not guess, *senhores*, how I dreaded to enter that water again. But I did enter it, swam out to where I had seen that pale shadow, and went down. And when I came up I brought the Bouto woman with me.

Yes, she was there—very still now, and so far down that I had hard work to reach the top again. She made no movement when I towed her to shore, nor after that. I toiled long to bring back her life, but she never breathed again.

"God help me, I have killed her!" I told Pedro, who now was able to help me.

And I spoke of my kick at the thing which grasped my leg, and of what had gone before.

"You did not kill her," he said. "She drowned. She is full of water. Your kick stunned her, perhaps, or knocked out her breath; but the kick itself did not kill. And even if it had killed, she was trying to murder us. I was almost dead—I was blind and had lost my senses. Do not reproach yourself."

Then he told me what had taken place out there. She had caught up with him, as he had expected. But then, instead of passing, she had made a swooping dive, seized an arm, turned him on his back and dragged him down head-first. She was under him, clutching him around the throat, and he could neither free himself nor even reach her. She had only to keep her grip and hold her breath while he drowned himself with his fierce struggles.

"But why?" I wondered.

"Do not ask me why any woman does anything. She did not like me, we know. Perhaps she thought that if she killed me

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you would stay and be her man. You were ahead, racing for the poles, and she probably thought you would not look back until you reached them. By that time she could stifle me, rise and swim after you as if nothing had happened. You would think I had exhausted myself and drowned alone after she passed me in the race."

I thought this over and disagreed.

"That may have been her plan," I said, "but I do not think that was her reason. There is something else. We must look further for the cause of this thing. Let us see what is in her house."

So up the bank we worked, bearing with us the strangely silent woman who now was silent for all time. Back to the base of the *massaranduba* we carried her, and there we laid her down in her hammock and carefully looked over everything in the house. But we found nothing to show who she was or why she should wander under the midnight moon to our camp and try to destroy us when we in turn came to her.

As Pedro had said, the house had been made by fire and ax. We found the ax—an old rusty tool which had not been used for a long time, and which bore no mark to show whence it had come. We closely examined the guns, machetes and clothing, and became fully convinced that they were those of rubber-workers. We counted the money again, peered into cooking-pots and gourds and everything that could possibly hold a clue. And when we ceased searching the place we were none the wiser.

"Why would you kill us?" Pedro mused, looking down at her. "We have no money—we are ragged rovers of the bush; and you did not care enough about money even to hide twelve thousand *milreis*. We offered you no harm, gave you no insult. And those other men—what did you do with them? Are their bones out there below that black water where you dragged me under?"

After a moment of thought I said:

"Let us go outside and look around. We have not yet been down behind this tree. Perhaps something is there."

Something was there. A little way back towered a big *moratinga* tree beneath which stood no bush. And in this natural clearing the ground was studded with five crosses.

"Five of them!" my partner exclaimed. "So there have been more than three men."

"Perhaps not. Perhaps there were three men and three women, and all died but she."

"The same hand made all those crosses," he pointed out. "Each leans a little to the left. Each cross-arm droops a little downward at the left. And—" he bent and examined the bush-cord holding the cross-pieces "—each cord is knotted in the same way."

It was true. We studied them, pondered, wondered, and searched farther. And we found nothing.

AS WE returned to the house the sun smote into our eyes. We squinted at each other and nodded. The day was going, and we had no mind to spend the night there. Taking the rusty ax and our machetes, we returned to the *moratinga* tree. After working there a while we made another trip to the house and back to the little cemetery. And when we left the tree for the last time a sixth cross stood beneath it—a cross which neither leaned nor drooped, but stood straight.

Back at the empty *massaranduba* we looked at each other.

"Twelve thousand *milreis* do nobody any good here," Pedro suggested.

"And there may be some one on the Branco who needs it," I added.

"If we pass the Branco we can go up and see. Or better still, we can go straight to Remate de Males as we intended, and question some of the Branco men waiting there for the time to go back to work. Old Jorge Faria might know."

In the glare of the dying day we tramped along the bank of the *enseada*, down the zigzag path, past the *moutá* on which still lay a dead man's breeches and machete, and over the pole-wall beyond which our canoe floated. Out through the twisting, bushy inlet we wormed our way to the sullen river, whose dirty waters now looked like a golden path in the long sun-rays. Then, with a long breath of relief, we shoved our paddles in deep and jumped the dugout away toward the next bend, bound for Remate de Males. With us went the twelve thousand *milreis*.

Days later, gaunt and tattered, out of food and cartridges, we reached the town. When we had left it the street was several feet under water; now it was bare ground. When we had gone men had shaken their heads and said we went to death; now they stared as if we were ghosts. But at the store of our old friend Joaquim the trader we

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soon proved that we were not too dead to attack a jug of *cachassa*, and as the news spread that we had returned our fellow *seringueiros* came in from all around the town to help us drink and hear the tale of our wanderings.

Among them came Jorge Faria, a veteran rubber-worker of the Branco, always smoking and seldom speaking. We were watching for him, and as soon as he had had a drink we got him into a small room behind the store, where we could talk undisturbed. And to him we told the whole tale of the wordless woman who swam like a dolphin and was deadly as a *jacaré*.

His eyes widened as we talked, but he said no word. When we told of the leaning crosses he spat excitedly and put his pipe back in his mouth upside down. And when from under our waist-bands we produced the money, which we had divided into two packets and fastened to our belts with strips torn from our shirts, he dropped the pipe.

"The Bouto!" he croaked.

"Oh, no," Pedro said wearily. "She swam like a *bouto*, but she was no fish turned woman. She was——"

"The Bouto," Jorge insisted. "Not the Bouto of the Amazon story, but the mad daughter of Lino Cardozo—she who was called the Bouto because she had a madness for drowning. Have you not heard of her?"

We had not.

"She was mad from birth. Three months before she was born her father, Lino, a rubber-worker on the Branco *seringal* of Senhor Fontoura da Gama, stumbled and fell off the river-bank. Before he could get out of the water a *jacaré* rose and seized him. Lino grabbed a root in the bank and hung to it, screaming for help while the beast dragged at him. But before aid could reach him his hold broke and he was pulled down.

"LINO'S wife saw it all, and the shock nearly turned her mind. And when the girl-child was born she had a twist in her brain. Yes, and a twist in her eye, for she never saw a thing exactly straight: anything which stood straight seemed to her to lean to the right, and if she stuck a stick in the ground she always slanted it a little to the left. This oddity soon became known, but of the kink in her mind nobody knew for years.

"It is true, she was not quite the same as the other children on the *seringal*, even when small. There was her habit of slanting things to the left, and besides that she was slow of speech——"

"She could talk, then?" I cut in.

"Yes, if she would. But once when she was about ten years old she said something that angered her mother, who beat her soundly. And from that day she held her tongue. Not one word did she ever speak after that. Queer, yes; but she was a queer girl. As I said, she was slow of speech before that day, and often she would stare in a vacant way as if her mind had flown for a moment. But she was a strong, plump child, and nobody suspected she was mad. 'Only a little odd,' was what the da Gama people thought of her.

"Perhaps her new habit of remaining dumb made her madness worse—I do not know. But before that time she had learned to swim, in a little *ygarapé* where the men built a wall of poles to keep out dangerous creatures, and had become a much better swimmer than any of the other children; and now the kink in her brain began to work. You might think her father's death and her mother's horror would make her fear the water, but it was not so. Instead, her twisted mind told her to drag things under the water, as the *jacaré* had dragged her father to death.

"At first she pulled down only sticks and pieces of log which she threw into the *ygarapé*. Then she began swimming below the other children and catching them by the feet or around the body, scaring them and often making them choke. And one day she pulled down a boy and almost drowned him before he could fight free.

"That made the rest fear her. They named her 'Bouto,' and they would not swim with her more. They drove her from the *ygarapé* when they swam there, and she had to do her swimming when they were not at the place. But every day she was there, seizing her logs and fighting to keep them under the surface. And I have heard—for I was not on the Branco in those days—that when a log escaped her she would pursue it with a glare in her eyes that chilled those who watched.

"Yet it was only in the water that she was dangerous. On land she was only a harmless, slow-smiling girl who slanted sticks to the left."

Jorge stopped, found his pipe, filled and

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lit it. When he went on his eyes were on Pedro.

"She was fifteen when I first went to the Branco. And in that year a tall, slim young fellow who had newly come to work on the da Gama estate made love to her. She had become quite handsome, and he—well, he did not intend to marry her. But she thought he did, and she liked him well until a *batelão* arrived from down the Javary, bringing a police officer who arrested the man for murdering his wife at Fonte Boa.

"The killer had a revolver, and so did the policeman. After the smoke cleared away the da Gama men had to bury them both.

"From that time on she hated men who were tall and slender—like you, Pedro. But men like Lourenço, shorter and more broad—she still liked them well enough."

I nodded, feeling that now her preference for me and her dislike for Pedro were explained.

"It was two years more," Jorge continued, "before another man really interested her. He was Bento Batalha, a heavy-muscled, cold-eyed man who was almost as silent and nearly as good a swimmer as she. Where he came from, and why, he never told, and we never asked. One does not ask too many questions on the Branco.

"Whether Bento and the Bouto ever talked to each other I do not know; nobody ever heard them. But whenever Bento went to headquarters he and she swam together in the walled *ygarapé*. There her madness broke out as before, and several times she tried to drown him. But he was too strong for her and always broke away. And instead of fearing these life-and-death struggles in the water he seemed to enjoy them, for he always had a grim smile when he came out. A queer man. A queer couple.

"Now the girl, being well-grown, helped her mother work around the house of Senhor da Gama, who, after the death of Lino, had taken the mother as his cook. She knew the house as well as Senhor da Gama himself—perhaps better. And when she and Bento disappeared together, as they did before long, something else disappeared also. Ten thousand *milreis*."

"Aha!" we cried, glancing at the money.

"Ten thousand *milreis*," Jorge repeated. "That and a canoe, Bento Batalha, the Bouto of the Branco—all gone between dark and dawn. And none has ever been found." We rolled cigarets. Then I said:

"There were five crosses under the tree. There are twelve thousand *milreis* here—two thousand more than da Gama lost."

"Yes. And it is six years since the Bouto vanished. In that time quite a number of men have left the Branco and have not returned. Most of them have gone out to the Solimoes, but some were not seen after leaving the Branco. One of the crosses under that *mandiroba* may be that of Bento. The other four—who knows?"

"Four men could easily have had two thousand *milreis* among them," Pedro agreed. "Batalha, the thief, probably had more than one reason not to hurry out to the big river. He made that house, built those pole-walls, and perhaps lured a few *seringueiros* in there to visit him—and to go swimming with his woman. Then he himself swam with her once too often."

"Who knows?" Jorge said again.

We smoked on, looking at the money. We knew Jorge was honest and would soon return to the Branco. And I said—

"The mother of the Bouto—does she still live?"

"She lives," Jorge answered, reading my thought. "And the two thousand *milreis* which do not belong to Senhor da Gama would be a fortune to her. She grows old, and she has nothing."

We passed the packets to him.

"See that she gets it," I said. "Nobody knows of this but us three, and nobody shall know of it until you have returned to the Branco. And now I am thirsty again."

And when Jorge had tied the money under his waist-band we went back to the outer room, where the crowd waited to buy us more *cachassa* and hear more about us.

So ends the tale, *senhores*, of the Bouto—the killer who was born in madness, mated in turn with a murderer and a robber, and died at last under the heel of a man fighting to save his comrade. Tonight this big moon, which showed us that dolphin back yonder in the river, shines down also on the ruins of the *tambo* where she first came to me, the huge *massaranduba* in whose butt yawns a black and empty home, and the tall *mandiroba* beneath which stand six crosses—five leaning and one straight.

Under that straight cross lies a tale that is told. But under the slanting sticks rest five more stories which none of us shall ever hear. They are locked for all time in the jungle—which is forever dumb.

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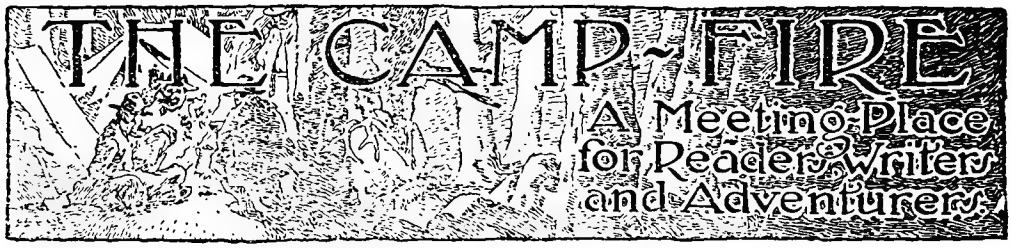

ONE of you asked whether Talbot Mundy's *Yasmini* was drawn from a historical character. I forwarded the letter to Mr. Mundy, he answered it and wrote the following in a letter to me:

No, she's not an historical character. I once saw a vision of an Indian lady in Bombay through the open door of a shuttered carriage. She smiled at me, and *Yasmini* was born that minute.

He didn't write that for publication but I'm taking a chance. Which shows great courage on my part, for Talbot Mundy is over six feet, a very husky person and with every right in the world to resent any fool inference that he is a lady-killer.

AN EXPEDITION OF OUR OWN

FROM a Canadian comrade comes one of the most interesting suggestions that has ever come in to Camp-Fire's desk. I'm going to give it in full, so as to bring the whole matter before you. But first let me make it plain that it's only the general idea to which your main attention is directed, so don't let any of the details distract you from it just because they may not meet your approval.

One of them I can bar out in advance. I'm strong for the main idea, but when it comes to my being one of the Directors, nothing doing. I would certainly not take the responsibility or the money and I couldn't possibly take the time. Nor do I believe very strongly in any salaried officers.

After you've digested comrade McDonald's letter, I'll venture to suggest a different working out of the main idea. Then it's your turn to send in suggestions and ideas. It is perfectly possible for us of Camp-Fire to send out an adventure or exploring expedition. There are, certainly, enough of us and to spare to raise all the money needed without any one's digging at all deep, and I'm pretty sure The Ridgway Company will chip in with its full share. But before we decide on the main point of whether we shall have an expedition of our own, we must decide what kind of expedition is most feasible and most interesting (I think we can forget about any chances of financial profit), and what part of the globe shall be explored, and how the expedition shall be organized. That's where your suggestions are needed first.

Who Would Like $10 Worth of Adventure?

Ottawa, Canada.

DEAR MR. HOFFMAN: You and Edgar Young certainly started something when you published that query of his, as the long sustained interest in the subject proves. This grows out of it, and if you and The Ridgway Company decide to publish this proposal and by so doing indorse it to the extent of offering it for the consideration of the great company of "Adventurers" in spirit who support the magazine it will certainly create "a ripple on the ocean."

I CONTEND that almost every regular reader of *Adventure* would like a chance to take part in a great adventure, but lacks money, opportunity, and the idea of how to do it. We could most of us put up $10 and never miss it. Ten dollars won't go far, but a lot of $10 bills, when combined, will.

Let us form a joint stock company with a subscription of $10 per share, each shareholder limited to one share. I would only limit the capital by the subscriptions received between certain given dates, say July 1st to July 31st.

Just for the sake of developing the idea let me assume that 10,000 readers of *Adventure* would respond, which would give us a capital of $100,000. Let the subscription lists be opened in a bank in New York and, say, the Bank Street Branch of the Bank of Montreal, Ottawa, and closed on the above dates.

LET the application form be a coupon published in the magazine which should comply with the company act and which should pledge the subscriber to voting for yourself and Edgar Young and some clever lawyer friend agreed upon by both of you as the three directors. Each subscriber on the same form to give you voting proxies for three years and agree to dispense with any but pro forma shareholders' meetings for that period. The idea is that we would need certain qualities in the directors, and that we ought to give them full powers so that they would not be bothered

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by any technicalities. We want imagination, which Edgar Young would supply, judgment, which the editor of *Adventure* must possess, and some knowledge of business technicalities and legal snags, which your lawyer friend would have.

I propose that immediately after the lists close the whole amount, except a few thousand dollars for expenses, should be at once invested in Victory Bonds of the U. S. and Canada which are likely to appreciate in price in the next few years, as money gets cheaper. The directors should receive an honorarium for their services, of $1,000 a year, a very inadequate sum for the services they would render, but would cover certain out-of-pocket expenses they might not feel inclined to charge up.

THE whole of the first year should be set aside to the directors receiving and examining at their leisure all the schemes that readers of *Adventure* might like to submit to them, from searches for buried treasure by land, or sunk in the sea, lost mines, or new mines, to expeditions to buy furs in the far north, or anything in fact which promises adventure for our money and an interest in life.

The directors to be given full powers to select the most promising of these, and risk in the second year a sum not exceeding a quarter of the entire capital subscribed if $100,000 or more, half of it if $50,000 or more, and all of it if less than $50,000. Personally I am betting on your getting at least $100,000, which would give $25,000 for the first adventure, and the interest accumulated the first year would meet or almost meet the first year's overhead expenses so as to leave $75,000 on deposit.

NOW having selected their objective and the small party of adventurers who would engage in it on any terms the directors thought fair, whether they were merely grub-staked, employed on salary and expenses, or given a definite interest and all expenses paid, and whether the expedition was a pure gamble or a reasonably sure thing, but in any case offering us all a partnership in a real adventure of some sort, it should be understood that when the $25,000 was spent that particular adventure should be called off, unless it was self-supporting and could be left as an investment. Not another nickel should be put up for it if a failure, or if it offered the most rosy hopes provided fresh money was put into it, but in the latter case the directors should be authorized to sell out and realize anything they could from the speculation.

The third year they should start out with another scheme of the same sort still limited to $25,000 for that year, and at the end of the third year should take stock and hold a shareholders' meeting in the regular way to decide what next should be done with the funds left.

You will notice I am assuming that up to the end of the third year no profits have been made and the capital used till then a total loss, or in other words putting it at its worst.

OF COURSE there will be many who would say the limitations I suggset would be too much like tin-horn speculation, and they would like a little more action, but such criticism would probably come from outsiders or from the very people who, while starting out to regard $10 apiece as a small stake not worth counting, would if no results were achieved, be the first to say after all the total capital was a big sum and if somebody wiser had been running it, results would have been different, or hint that there was a nigger in the woodpile. Now I want to limit each adventurer's investment to something that will not matter. To give a free hand to the directors to tempt them to assume the responsibility, to leave with them no regrets if they lose every cent, and to spread out our tiny hostage to fortune so that no matter how bad the luck, we shall have three or four years' run for our money and all the excitement of getting a possibly big return for such a small amount. But chiefly the idea is to provide a fund for financing adventurous research which offers a chance of profit, and which will make good copy.

THE idea of opening a subscription list in Canada is merely to avoid the Canadians' having to pay $11 to $12 to send $10 to New York at present rates of exchange. Then Canadian Victory bonds are as good or better than U. S. bonds; besides it might be useful to have funds here if you happened to determine on an adventure in the Canadian Northlands. Any way it would be a more sporting international arrangement for the brotherhood of *Adventure* friends each side of the line.

If The Ridgway Company would give us an occasional column of news in the magazine about the adventure that would be all that would be necessary. Of course there would be a small office staff, to run the books and take care of the correspondence. A manager and a stenographer ought to be enough. The interest on the capital lying invested would amply cover this and other like expenses. We would have lots of fun and a long run for our money. Why not take the advice of your readers on the scheme, and bear in mind that it would be first-class advertising for the magazine. It must be understood that beyond contributing my $10 I would not take any part in the scheme.—RICHARD H. MCDONALD.

There are many things in the above plan that appeal tremendously—most of all, our all getting together in a real adventure enterprise of our own. That last is the main idea and is too good to be lost. The above plan is sound enough from a business point of view in theory, but in practise I fear too many difficulties would arise.

IN THE first place we are too scattered and too many to meet, talk things over and settle questions by direct vote. Therefore, as planned above, we'd have to choose a few of our number to make our decisions for us. All of us are eligible, but, since we can't hold a primary and a thorough election, the choice of our officers would have to be more or less arbitrary (as arbitrary and undemocratic as a convention of our political parties), and how could we possibly satisfy all of us that the right ones

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had been chosen and the right ones passed by?

A far greater objection is that—well, Heaven help the poor fellows who were selected for officers. Believe me, on this point I sure know what I'm talking about, for I've sat at your editorial desk for over ten years and know from experience that any one who makes any decisions for you gets cussed black and blue and is blamed for all kinds of things. Even when he pleases the majority the minority make things hot for him. No, you're "not a bad lot," but I figure there are somewhere around a million of you and out of any million people there'll always be enough to condemn without a hearing, to find fault no matter what happens and to make trouble generally. Now consider a situation in which these natural-born kickers have invested a bit of their own cash in a proposition and therefore have full right to voice themselves on any point involving use of said cash.

YOU can see what would happen. No officer job for mine. I go further and give an earnest warning to any and all of you that if you want to lead a half-way comfortable life you'd better dodge the officer job. If it were merely a question of me personally I might feel under obligation to take such a job if offered, but it's also a question of our magazine, for it too would be blamed for everything and get a lot of enemies it wouldn't deserve or want. Don't make any mistake. This isn't any politician's refusal. If I thought it was the sensible thing to do to accept if offered, I'd accept without any hemming and hawing and let the kickers kick till they were tired. As it is, there's nothing doing so far as I'm concerned.

No matter who took these officer jobs, there would be trouble which would not only add soreness to the big load of work they'd have to do but would seriously cripple that work and probably end the whole enterprise in a row.

Another thing. Which of us would get to go on the expeditions? And who would do the selecting? And how would they pull together after they'd been collected, strangers to each other, from all kinds and all places? It might work out all right, but I bet the other way. There would be thousands of applicants and all but a handful would be disappointed and maybe sore.

THE main idea of Mr. McDonald's suggestion is splendid, but, after talking it over with quite a few of you in and out of the office, all of whom agree, I'm dead against our magazine or any few of us having direct charge of any expedition sent out.

I'm also against a treasure-hunt. It is almost certain of failure and, while we may allow for this in advance and go in for the excitement and interest as the main object, failure is failure and none of us get much pleasure out of it.

All credit to Mr. McDonald for his idea. Whatever form it develops into, the chief credit is his alone. But, after consulting with those of you I could, let me suggest the following modification:

LET us choose such an object for the expedition that we can be reasonably sure of succeeding in what we set out to do. If we're going into the back of beyond to get something, let's be reasonably sure of getting it. The kind of expedition surest of real results is scientific exploration. Let's make it The Adventure Expedition under the Auspices of the —— Museum. In addition to having our fun, we can be doing a real and a permanent service to the world in general.

We of course give our own name to the expedition. We have sufficient voice in selecting the object and destination of the expedition to insure its being adventurous enough to give us our money's worth. The Museum naturally would choose its own scientists, but, if they could not include one who could furnish us with interesting, non-technical reports as they went along, we'd put in a man who could. The Museum would select any men, other than scientists, who might be needed, for an expedition should have only one boss, but we could insist that they select such men, if any, from our number. Contributions and applications would be sent direct to the Museum and they would be responsible for funds from start to finish, turning back any surplus to our magazine to be held for a possible later expedition, or, if considerable enough, to be returned pro rata to contributors. The specimens collected would be labeled in the Museum as

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our collection, though of course the property of the Museum. It might be feasible to bring back from the scene of exploration a small souvenir for each contributor, nothing of particular intrinsic value but some bit of something as a memento of the occasion.

Think it over carefully and see whether this wouldn't be a sensible and practical variation of the original idea.

THERE are other possible points. It might be that the Museum, in addition to the men actually needed, might be willing to take on one or two who were willing to pay all their own expenses. A regular member, whether scientist or layman, would have his expenses paid but no salary out of our funds, the only salaries being those paid its scientists by the Museum. Possibly a motion-picture company might be allowed to send a man entirely at its own expense and in consideration of a payment to our fund and our expedition's name on the pictures. Possibly an artist, giving our magazine the right to use his pictures. And so on.

NOW! How about it? Come across with your ideas and suggestions on the whole plan and on any part of it.

Can we raise the money? How much can we raise? Probably $5000 would send a two or three man expedition, say, into Central America. Start from there and figure how big a one we could send and how far we could send it. Count on the magazine for a contribution on its own account in addition to what we individuals put in.

Where shall we send it? Pick out a place that is likely to furnish real adventure along the way. Remember that distance increases cost tremendously, yet is likely to increase interest and results. Let's find a place we can afford to reach but that hasn't already been walked over much. Better bar the arctic and antarctic; special equipment runs high and adventures there are likely to be more those of endurance than of action.

Shall we put the "shares" at $10 as suggested in the above plan? If so, don't you think we ought to have "part shares" or "good will shares" at any amount down to $1? With an honor roll in our magazine for those taking the greatest number of shares? Tell us in advance, without obligation, how big a contribution our expedition can look for from you, but don't send any money yet. (And, anyhow, money won't be sent to this office in any case.)

THERE'S one big point we don't want to forget. Almost anywhere our expedition goes there will be some of our members along the way or near the scene and the practical advice and help we can count on from them is a big item. And there will be a whole lot more of our comrades who can give practical advice and pointers from past experience. Our expedition ought to have more practical brains back of it than any other that ever started.

I'm so strong for this expedition that I'm afraid to let my enthusiasm get on paper. Why shouldn't a bunch of adventurers, active, retired and "arm-chair," send out their own adventurous expedition, all uniting in good comradeship to make it a success? We've been talking together for nearly ten years; here's a chance to *do* something together. It would be sort of good to get regular reports from "our expedition in the field," but best of all to be united in this common interest, and to know that we're doing something worth while as well as good fun.

I'm sure anxious to hear Camp-Fire speak up on this game.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom Philip W. Sayers rises and introduces himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine:

Scranton, Pennsylvania.

By way of introducing myself to Camp-Fire, let me say first that I am mighty glad to have the privilege for once of talking and pulling on the old pipe without having the said caubeen made the object of totally unmerited abuse and the turning of my learned discourse into a soliloquy.

There is so little to say about myself that I feel like a cad in not being able to offer something worth while in return for the many things of interest and value which I have found in Camp-Fire. When I was a high school sophomore I wrote for the school monthly a detective story which for some unaccountable reason the faculty advisors were disinclined to accept as original. And this was the cause for the community losing a respectable citizen and gaining—pardon—adding, a writer.

I HAVE been, among other things, a railroad semi-official (secretary to an official), a mucker, and a soldier of sorts; and if those rough-necks in France hadn't been in such a hurry to bust up the

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war I would have had a shavetailcy. Like *Pryor* in the story, I am possessed of an irresistible desire to go and see what lies "over the hill," and in obedience to that impulse I have covered quite a few miles by rail, hoof and foot—but somehow real adventure has passed me by.

Once in pre-pro days I missed dissolution by the narrow margin of a bum cartridge in a canned-up brakeman's lead-slinger. On another occasion I let a fellow take away a pot the size and value of a ton of coal by overlooking the fact that I held an ace high straight! And again some imbecile roommates of mine once unwrapped and un-pink-ribboned a costly box of bon-bons, threw away the contents (so they afterward said), and filled the box with an uncouth collection of apple-cores, an old sock, a bandana, a pipe that I will admit *was* somewhat disreputable, and Volstead knows what else. Blithely unconscious of all this, I sent the box on its way.

So that, in consequence of the above related incidents, I am alive, perpetually broke, and unmarried. When I have learned how to roll a cigaret with one hand I will pass out contented. And I guess that's about all.—PHILIP W. SAYER.

WHEN this woman comrade says "expect to find" she means just that, for by the time you see this she will probably have moved to Colombia:

Box 106, Route 2.
Whittier, California.

If Mr. James C. McKay of Manhattan, Kansas, will get "Atlantis, the Antediluvian World", by Ignatius Donnelly, he will not only find it interesting but it may help answer some of the questions in his mind.

Can any one tell me something of the history of the old Southern family, the Brownlows? Wasn't there a song or poem written, called "Parson Brownlow's Daughter" founded on an actual act of hers—that she made her house a place of refuge for all, both North and South, and dared a company to take a man from her house over her body, her only companion being her Old Mammy?

Is there any authentic history concerning the cliff-dwellers? From all I've read, believe they entered their homes by crude ladders or ropes from above and letting themselves down instead of from the ground up as some folks think.

Can some one tell me what I may expect to find, as to Indians, language, habits, etc., living in the department of Antioquia, Colombia, South America, and how I can find out things from them as to traditions, religious and racial?—MRS. BLANCHE ANDERSON.

FROM G. A. Wells of our writers' brigade some interesting words concerning Joe Slade of the old West:

New Albany, Indiana.

A letter from Mr. Jno. L. Riggs, Chloride, Arizona, in the May 3 issue refers to Pat Garrett, Billy the Kid, Joe Slade and other famous characters of the old West. If Camp-Fire has room for it, possibly some readers may find interest in an account of Slade as related by John W. Clampitt in his book, "Echoes from the Rocky Mountains" (Belford, Clarke & Co., Chicago, 1889). Mr. Clampitt was associated with various United States courts in the West during its "wild and woolly" days and should know something about it.

"AMONG all the executions by the Vigilance Committee of Montana none occasioned so much comment. . . as that of Joseph Alfred Slade. He had been a member of the organization himself and had often declared himself in favor of good order in the Territory. He was raised in Clinton County, Illinois, and came of a highly respected family and bore a good reputation while at home. He was in nowise connected with the gang of outlaws who made a pandemonium of the young Territory. . . the acts which gave celebrity to his name were performed in another part of the West, chiefly on the line of the Overland Mail, where for years he was a trusted official.

"He was an honest, kind-hearted, intelligent man, noted for his strong friendships and generous qualities. There are to-day (1889) a multitude of men in the West possessing a full knowledge of the leading incidents of his life who still speak of him as a perfect gentleman, and pronounce his execution as a murder."

AT ONE time Slade was superintendent of what was known as the Sweetwater Division of the mail line, including that part of the line between the "Upper Crossing" of the South Platte River and Rocky Ridge. Slade's affair with Jules Beni, w om he later killed, is perhaps the most widely-known incident of his life therefore let me give an account of that business from the pen of a man whose 'source of information leaves no room for doubt as to its correctness."

"Jules Beni was a Frenchman who kept the station at Upper Crossing, and from whom the town of Julesburg (Colo.) derived its name. He was a lawless character, and his high-handed acts in dealing with the stock of the mail line induced the company in 1858 to appoint Slade to the agency of that particular division.

"BENI would not willingly submit to the authority of the new agent, but Slade was a man of determined will and would brook no interference. Mutual dislike and an open rupture resulted. One day in the early Spring of 1859 Slade, Beni and some of the stage boys were talking together in the corrall. Beni withdrew and went to his house, an adobe structure. Slade followed soon after, saying that he would get something to eat. He started for another building used by the stage boys.

"As he was about to enter the building Beni stepped from the adobe house not far away and shot Slade three times. Sladedid not fall, so Beni reached for a shotgun and shot Slade again with both barrels. Then Slade fell. Beni, thinking he had killed Slade, offered the other men a dry-goods box in which to bury Slade. Slade heard the remark and rose up and declared that he was not dead, but would get well and avenge himself. At the time of the shooting Slade was unarmed.

"He was carried into the building and given attention, and in a few weeks was well enough to return to his old home at Carlisle, Ills. Later he returned to duty with the mail company."

At the time of the shooting the other members of the party held a consultation and decided to

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punish Beni for shooting Slade. They slung a pole across the tops of two freight wagons, looped a rope about Beni's neck and pulled him up. Before he strangled to death however, Ben Ficklin, general superintendent of the company, happened along and cut him down. When he had revived and it was known that Slade would recover he was offered his liberty on condition that he would leave that part of the country. He accepted the conditions and went to Denver.

Says Mr. Clampitt: "It must be borne in mind that at that period there was no legal tribunal near at hand before which he could be tried. There was no 'law' from the Missouri River to California, save the Miners' Courts at Denver and in Nevada, and the Mormon tribunal at Salt Lake City. Colorado was not then a Territory; there was a kind of provisional government. The Territorial name presented was that of Jefferson, afterward changed to Colorado upon the passage of the Organic Act."

WHEN he had recovered from the wounds inflicted by Beni and had returned to his duties with the mail company Slade was disposed to let by-gones be by-gones. He even sent word to Beni that if he would stay away he had nothing to fear at his, Slade's, hands. Beni, however, would not leave well enough alone.

"In August, 1861, Slade was proceeding over his division from Rocky Ridge, and on the line he heard that Beni was driving some stock along the regular stage road over which Slade was obliged to pass. Slade's family lived at Horse Shoe, about thirty miles west of Fort Laramie, and there he stopped for a week for the purpose, it is believed, to allow Beni to pass on with his stock.

"AT THE end of the week he went on to Laramie and found that Beni had not left the country, but was only twelve miles away. He consulted with some friends and it was decided to capture Beni and kill him before he ambushed Slade somewhere along the line. Beni and his crowd was therefore taken twenty miles east of Laramie and Slade killed Beni. Sufficient stock was taken from his herd and given to Slade to pay Slade for the wounds he had received at the hands of Beni.

"In justification of this killing on the part of Slade it was said that Beni lingered for the express purpose of meeting and killing Slade. He was heard to say that he had come for a scalp, and that he would get Slade or Slade would get him, and he 'wasn't afraid of any —— driver, express rider or any one else.' "

THE mail company and the military court at Laramie exonerated Slade. It has been said that Slade shot Beni to death little by little to make his punishment worse, and that after he was dead he cut off both Beni's ears. It was also alleged that Slade killed the father of a half-breed boy, the boy afterward being adopted. Another report says that some emigrants passing through had their stock stolen and that Slade, hearing of it and suspecting a certain crowd, went to the ranch where the thieves were supposed to live and, opening fire through a window of the house, killed three men and wounded another. There were also many stories of hangings, shooting, assaults and beatings committed by Slade. Most of these reports were denied by his friends.

At any rate, when he went to Virginia City, Montana, in the Spring of 1863, he carried a rather evil reputation there with him. The Summer of that year he went to Milk River as a freighter and made lots of money, all of which he got rid of in no time gambling.

JANUARY 14, 1864, the Vigilance Committee of Virginia City, Montana, executed five men for various offenses. The Committee then disbanded and in its place was established a provisional court before which all offenders were to be tried by judge and jury. Judge Alexander Davis was on the bench in this court. Now hear what Mr. Clampitt says about the death of Slade:

"After his return from Milk River it became a common thing for him (Slade) and his pals to take the town by storm. They would ride their horses through the main streets shooting and yelling like red devils, dashing their horses through open doorways into stores, wrecking them and using the most insulting language to the inmates.

"Many times he was warned by his friends that his lawless conduct would end in certain retribution, but he took no heed of the warning and persisted in his course until it was expected that at any moment some bloody outrage would be committed by him.

"Finally, after a night of drinking and carousal, he was arrested by the sheriff and taken before Judge Davis. While the warrant was being read to him he snatched it from the sheriff's hand and tore it to pieces. He then pulled his gun and threatened the judge. That act sealed his doom.

"ONCE more the Vigilance Committee was called together and after deliberation it passed sentence of death on Slade. Public opinion demanded that Slade be put out of the way. Six hundred miners marched in a body to the executive committee and demanded his execution.

"Slade learned of the decision of the Committee and it sobered him. He went to Judge Davis and humbly apologized for his conduct, but it was then too late. The head of the column wheeled into Wallace Street and halted before the store where Slade was apologizing to the judge. When he was taken he began to plead for mercy, and to see his wife, who was at the time on their ranch at Madison, twelve miles from Virginia City.

"The Committee was obdurate, and in the end Slade was roped about the neck, stood on a box and swung off to eternity. And such was the end of Joseph Alfred Slade, 'the idol of his followers and the terror of his foes!' "

In passing let me say that the Montana Vigilance Committee executed thirty-two men in two years of its existence.—G. A. WELLS.

OTHERS of our writers' brigade besides Gordon McCreagh have gone a-wandering. At this writing T. S. Stribling is in Porto Rico, headed by a zigzag route through Central and South America down to Rio or thereabout. And Kenneth Howell stood it as long as he could, found a passenger trip to the West Indies couldn't make his foot stop itching and shipped on a tramp for the south of South America as the first step of said tramp's not yet determined long

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voyage. (Later. Word has just come that Mr. Howell's trip has been called off.)

IS WANDERLUST a form of insanity? Now let me step hastily aside while the rest of you settle it.

Chicago.

I have been roaming around the world, mostly out of the way places, since I was fourteen years old (I am now thirty-one) having run away to sea at that age and am getting pretty tired of it all, but can't seem to quit and settle down. I have been told by well-read men that study insanity, that the wanderlust is a mild form of insanity. I would like to get other readers' opinion on this. Is this wanderlust a form of insanity and is there any cure other than marriage? I have never tried marriage and would like to settle down before thinking of it.—FRANK POLNER.

IN CONNECTION with the above and with Edgar Young's by now historic quotation, "What is the spirit of adventure, biologically speaking?" read the following, sent in by comrade A. A. Stafford from Reno, Nevada, from the *Nevada State Journal* and by comrade Wootton from some other paper or other edition of the same paper:

Why You Crave Adventure

Do you love adventure? Yes? Then you have the makings of success, for the craving for adventure is the cause of all progress, according to Professor J. Arthur Thomson, British scientist.

ALL forms of life, Thomson says, voluntarily choose the difficult path of hard work, to gratify their desire for adventure.

Life in the water is much easier than life on the land. Yet for millions of years, animals have been attempting—with success—to get out of the sea in order to live more interesting lives on land.

"Worms, which came out of the sea, were the first colonizers of the earth," Thomson says. "In every acre of soil there are 53,000 worms, constantly plowing. Without the worm, plant and animal life would be impossible. All life came from the sea, including man's ancestors.

"A CODFISH lays 2,000,000 eggs and takes no further thought of them. On land, every creature must care for its eggs and its young—all hidden away in secret holes and cleverly constructed nests.

"As an enemy approaches a spider's home, down comes a wonderful trap-door fitted with silken hinges. Spiders' young are lowered through a deep and well-plastered vertical tunnel. The spider was the first living carpenter, the first engineer, the first plasterer.

"The second invasion of land was by flowers and insects.

"AMPHIBIANS were the third invaders, leading up to all the higher animals. With their coming the world's awful silence was broken. The first voice was the croak of the frog—first animal with a tongue. Back of these invasions and developments was—adventure."

Isn't the search for adventure the dominant emotion of our lives? It begins with the boy hunting imaginary Indians.

Stock market plungers, builders of railroads, soldiers going to war, immigrants seeking new lands, country boys setting forth to battle the cities—adventure is behind them all.

Sad is the life deprived of that tremendous adventure, love. Finally comes death. Is it by chance or by guiding instinct that we call it The Great Adventure?

WHILE it happens to be his second story in our magazine instead of his first, he hasn't yet introduced himself to Camp-Fire, so Lewis H. Kilpatrick rises and does so now:

Mount Sterling, Kentucky.

Folks, this just suits me. I'll choose a camp-fire any time in preference to a salon, and this lengthy carcass of mine always feels more at home in khaki rambling duds than in evening clothes. Among friends my name's Kil— or, upon occasion, Colonel—what's yours? But it really doesn't matter. It's the heart behind the name that counts. And if you'll let me light my pipe and sit with you in the glowing circle, I'll introduce myself further.

EVERY genuine Kentuckian is, by inheritance, an adventurer. Yet, contrary to certain paragraphers, only a few of us are gun-toters, murderers and drunkards. Speaking for myself, I've never shot a man, bet a dollar on a horse or been thoroughly saturated with Bourbon. Shameful confession for a Corncracker, perhaps, but true. Less than a century ago I came into existence in the lap of the Blue Grass Region, but ringing my eastern and southern horizon were the foothills of the Kentucky Mountains. Toward those mountains my heart and my wanderings were early directed, and from them I draw the material for most of my stories. Of course I've followed trails through other parts of this hemisphere; but I'll confine this monolog to my own State.

Here my adventures have ranged from the emotional beneath the brain-destroying Southern moon to that both emotional and physical adventure when, for one long, tense day, I faced a mob of ten thousand men before the Lexington court-house, February, 1920, and saw good Kentucky blood spilled by Kentucky bullets. I have been in the feud country when feuds were much the vogue, tramped those same hills where "narry another furriner" had pressed a heel, and—but, well, there may be a revenue officer among you to whom that interrupted statement would prove too interesting for my personal comfort.

DURING the Spring, Summer and Autumn my greatest pleasure is to put on these very khaki clothes, strap a pack to my shoulders and foot it alone through that section of the Kentucky Mountains which I call the Red River Country. There I select me a certain "rock-house," far away from any habitation, pitch camp, rustle my own chow, sleep the sleep of perfect health beneath the star-sprinkled sky, and renew my acquaintance with my inner self.

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There, too, is Whit, the illiterate ex-moonshiner, whose rugged soul sings through the music of his banjo; Blue Jewel (*Luke McLuke* should have that name!), who can catch fish even in a dew drop; Bertha, with the lovely face and sad eyes, a mountain dryad; Nath, quick tempered but loyal Nath, ever ready to add another notch to his rifle stock; Aunt Lucy, who once skinned her husband by accidentally rubbing him with lye soap instead of goose grease; and a host of other folk whose friendship I am proud to possess and whose cabin doors are always open to me.

IT IS this race of big-hearted, pure-blooded men and women, usually so misunderstood, that I want to introduce, to you along with myself through our pages. If their faults are pronounced, their virtues are just as pronounced; if they take life, they are even more ready to give their own lives in defense of their friends and principles. True Kentuckians, 100% American, these Southern mountaineers religiously hold to that which is best in our traditions and culture and national ideals.

And now I'll just say I'm mighty glad to meet you folks. May we all gather about the Camp-Fire often, warming our hearts by its comradely glow!—LEWIS H. KILPATRICK.

SOMETHING from Arthur O. Friel in connection with his story in this issue:

I have taken the liberty of making *Lourenço* call the dolphin a fish, which is not quite correct. The dolphin is, of course, a cetacean mammal—sort of a little brother of the whale—and not a fish at all. But the Brazilian rubber-worker would hardly be likely to know that, and he certainly would call it a fish. For that matter, there are plenty of well-educated Americans who don't know the difference either.—ARTHUR O. FRIEL.

HERE is something on the subject of long cavalry marches, and a bit as to bending a half-dollar or tearing a deck, or two decks, of cards with the fingers:

Sumas, Washington.

COMRADES: For many years I wandered with you in the flesh, through the Philippines, Japan, China, India, the Malay Peninsula, and our own Alaska and in the spirit these later years I have through the pages of our magazine wandered over all the countries of the globe. Never before have I broken into print, but two items in the mid-April, 1921, number of our magazine have caused me to break a long silence.

In the first place I wish to take exception to the statement made by S. B. H. Hurst in his story "The Mending," in which he says, "One may read of men who can bend a half-dollar but such a man never lived." I saw a man named Gabriel McPhee who turned this trick more times than I would care to state, and he also could take any two decks of cards and tear them in two.

SECOND, noting the article by H. P. entitled "Swift Cavalry Marches," thought I would like to see in print somewhere an article covering one of the greatest cavalry marches ever made. I quote now from the General Order issued after the march was completed.

Headquarters, Army of Cuban Pacification.

General Orders No. 32. Marianao, Havana, Cuba. April 13, 1908.

The Commanding General has pleasure in calling to the attention of this command the unusual and extraordinary feat just performed by Troops F & G, 11th Cavalry. These troops were sent from Camp Columbia to Pinar del Rio and were in camp engaged in target practise during the month of March, when their horses had very little exercise and no drills. It can, in fact, be said that they were practically standing on the picket-line. For the ten days beginning April 1st these troops took part in field exercises which were of a very strenuous character, demanding much of men and horses.

THE commanding general's experience, after careful observation, prompted the belief that our animals were in fine condition, due to good care and putting into practise the experience gained during former service in Cuba. Opinions vary as to the amount of work that may be demanded of men and animals in the tropics. To determine this conclusively and to have a thorough knowledge of what may be expected of them, experiment must be made or it is a matter of opinion and guess-work.

Troops F & G, 11th Cavalry, were therefore authorized to return from Pinar del Rio to Camp Columbia as rapidly as possible consistent with maintaining men and horses in serviceable condition and ready for action at the end of the march. It was suggested that ten selected men and horses be taken from each of the four troops of the 2nd Squadron, 11th Cavalry, and trained for this return march. This was disapproved because the feat was not to be by trained and specially selected men and horses to come through in the shortest time practicable, but, on the other hand, the bringing of an entire troop through, fully equipped in heavy marching order, armed with rifle, saber and pistol, and have it, at the end of the march, ready for action.

TO AVOID any ill effects to man or beast the captains were instructed to permit no man to make the march whom the medical officer at the camp reported against, and not to take any horses that were sick or incapacitated in any way. They were cautioned that it was not a race nor was it desired to rush through with such men and horses as could make the trip, stringing the rest along the road.

Having full confidence in the two captains concerned to take thorough care of their troops and to carry out explicitly the wishes of their commanding general, no other instructions were given; *i. e.*, the conduct of the march was left entirely to them, with the distinct understanding that if they saw their men or horses weakening they would stop and come in at a slow pace.

BEFORE this march was made there was considerable discussion by those concerned, and by many who were not concerned, as to the expediency of it, and there were many who did not believe that the march could be made in this climate at this time of the year.

The proper spirit to manifest on occasions when officers and men have a hard task to perform is to

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encourage them by word and act and not dishearten them by arguing that the feat is impossible. In this instance the two captains concerned and the officers and men of their troops were heartily in the spirit of the feat and had full confidence in themselves and their mounts, and were not to be discouraged. Their commanding general shared this confidence and the result justifies it.

IN ROUND numbers the distance from the target camp at Pinar del Rio to Camp Columbia, by the route traveled is 110 miles. The march has been made and, in the history of the American Army, it is doubted if such a feat has ever been performed with such results.

Troop F covered the distance, including halts, in approximately 29 hours: Troop G in approximately 30 hours. Careful personal examination by the commanding general, the inspector general of the Army, and the supervising veterinarian, reveals the fact that men and horses came through without injury to a single man or horse, not even to the extent of one sore back.

THE credit for this extraordinary result is due entirely to the troop commanders and their officers and men; to the efficient handling and instruction; and to the spirit that animated them.

The commanding general extends to them, one and all, his sincere congratulations. In the tropics and without the inspiration of an enemy, this feat is marvelous and demonstrates what may be expected of the American soldier and horse when properly appealed to, instructed and led; it is all the more remarkable when it is considered that of the 81 enlisted men who made the march, 34 have had less than one year's service.

By command of Brigadier-General Barry:

(Sgd) MILLARD F. WALTZ,
Lieutenant-Colonel, Chief of Staff.

I was top-kick of Troop G when this march was made. Troop G came in as an entirety in the time of thirty hours. Troop F brought in approximately 25 men in the 29 hours and the rest came in in bunches covering a period of approximately three hours more.—W. M. KARTZMARK.

AS THE editor of the *Shooting Times* remarks, it fairly makes us gasp. Our thanks to F. St. Mars of our writers' brigade for making us acquainted with this superpoacher. Here is Mr. St. Mars' letter:

Southsea, Hants. England.

We all love adventure. I thought Camp-Fire might be interested in the bit of adventure enclosed from a far land. Mind, this guy had all the wealth of the moneystocracy, the police, the gamekeepers, and the sneaks against him. Surely he did it for pure sport. I sold him a rifle a few years back.

Re where bullet went against anthill in "Yurumi." It went to bits! All of 'em did. They were supposed to be M. P. But even if they had gone in half a foot or half a yard, it would have made no difference to Yurumi's feat. A mere foil comparison, that is all.—F. ST. MARS.

P. S. I mention the point because it just struck me the same had been raised. It was English ammunition.

CONFESSIONS OF A POACHER

To the Editor of the *Shooting Times*

DEAR SIR:—Having read "Taxidermist's" letter in *Shooting Times* of January 8th, referring to my poaching expeditions, I have come to the conclusion that he thinks himself very clever for knowing so much about my poaching, and would make a first-class detective. As to going on my bicycle with a .22 Stevens favourite rifle, I may say I have never possessed a Stevens favourite rifle, and never charged 6d. a share when raffling off game. He does mention in his letter the lots of game which I have given to sick persons. If "Taxidermist" is seeking information I will tell him that I shot over 1,100 head of game last season with a .22 Winchester automatic rifle. This season my bag has not been so large, as I have been in regular employment so have not had much time to spare. I find it far easier working than poaching, and there is not so much strain on my nerves. I do not recommend any one to be a poacher, and as I have had 27 years at the game I should know a little about it. My bag this season, so far, is 96 hares, 112 pheasants, 11 partridge, 8 rabbits, 5 ducks, and 2 wild geese. On the 29th of last month I broke my record for this season, shooting 26 pheasants, of which 16 were hens and 10 cocks; also 2 hares, and got wet through in the bargain. As to the cutting enclosed by "Taxidermist," I may say that I was not caught poaching, but I was convicted on circumstantial evidence, and of the 25 previous convictions for poaching, I have been caught red-handed only once, by four police and three keepers coming from the direction of Colonel Pilkington's estate with 30 rabbits in my possession. I have had the pleasure of shooting all the largest estates in Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Nottinghamshire, and have had some very good pheasant shooting in Welbeck Park, the Duke of Portland's property. If "Nosey Parker" will send me his name and address I shall be happy to give him all the information he requires.—

Yours truly,
DAVID MAWSON.

30 Wigan Lane, Coppull, near Chorley.

(The audacity of this letter fairly makes us gasp. If there is any truth in the saying, "An old poacher makes the best gamekeepers," what an efficient keeper Mawson would make!—ED.)

IN CONNECTION with his article in this issue here is a word from F. R. Bechdolt.

Breckenbridge told me this story after I got it from Wm. Nutley, a cowman. Breckenbridge is now claim agent for the Southern Pacific at Tucson. Mr. Morse, once owner of a sawmill in the Chiracahuas and now a San Diego lumber dealer and banker also confirmed it. I have transposed the incident of shooting the cup to its place at the beginning to help values. Otherwise made no changes in facts.—FREDERICK R. BECHDOLT.

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VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one.* They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules,* thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure,* New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid,* the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: March, April, July, 1914. Jan., Feb., April, May, June, July, Sept., Oct., Dec., 1915. 1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920 complete. Fifteen cents per copy plus postage. Complete issues for a year will not be divided.—Address ROBERT P. CONRAD, P.O. Box 802, Mount Kisco, N. Y.

WILL SELL: From Mid-Feb., 1920, to date complete for fifteen cents each. These are in good condition and will be sold in one lot.—Address PHILIP F. SMITH, R. F. D. 1, Saint Joe, Indiana.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of this issue.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 519 Citizens Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

2. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, Seattle Press Club, 1209 Fifth Ave., Seattle, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next department.*)

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Fla. Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Me. Maine. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. The Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. Early history of Missouri Valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

9. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
LARRY ST. JOHN, Saugatuck, Mich. Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

10. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

11. Western U. S. Part 2; and Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 West 10th St., Austin, Tex. Texas, Oklahoma, and the border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

12. ★ Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, Apartado 168, Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico. Lower California: Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, business and general conditions. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

13. North American Snow Countries Part 1
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Height of Land and northern Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern Ungava

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

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nd Keewatin. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; quipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; ninerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions anwered on trapping for profit.

4. North American Snow Countries Part 2
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Ottawa Valey and southeastern Ontario. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, nining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, campng, aviation.

5. North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Tweed, Ont., Canada. Georgian Bay nd southern Ontario. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeng.

6. North American Snow Countries Part 4
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Hunters Island and English River district. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

7. North American Snow Countries Part 5
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

8. North American Snow Countries Part 6
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, backpacking, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

9. North American Snow Countries. Part 7
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

10. North American Snow Countries Part 8
JAS. P. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power.

11. Hawaiian Islands and China
C. J. HALTON, 632 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

12. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, language, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

13. South America. Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile; geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

14. South America. Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Venezuela, the Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

15. Asia, Southern
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, 1315 Josephine Street, New Orleans, La. Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, western China, Borneo. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

16. Philippine Islands
JACK CONNOR, 5444 Hollywood Building, Hollywood, Calif. History, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

17. Japan
MAJOR PETER T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

18. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., ret.), care *Adventure*. Petrograd and its province, Finland, Northern Caucasus, Primorsk district, island of Sakhalien. Travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

19. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, Niger River to Lagoba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora, tribal histories, witchcraft.

20. Africa Part 2 Morocco
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

21. Africa Part 3 Tripoli
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, 1315 Josephine Street, New Orleans, La. Including the Hoggar Tuaregs. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

32. Africa Part 4 Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

33. ★ Africa Part 5 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, Ile de Lerne, par Vannes, Morbihan, Brittany, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Postage 12 cents.*)

34. Africa Part 6 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, 40 South Clark Street, Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

35. ★ New Zealand; and South Sea Islands Part 1
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Postage 8 cents.*)

36. South Sea Islands Part 2
CHARLES BROWN, JR., 213 E St., San Rafael, Calif. French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn). Natives, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

37. ★ Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

WEAPONS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

C.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheellock and snaphaunce varieties.. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; bait and fly casting and advice; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receiverships in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union may be called upon for general information relating to Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address L. S. Rowe, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Comm., Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents—in Mr. Mills' case 8 cents and in Mr. Beadle's 12 cents—in stamps NOT attached)

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Canada's Restrictions on Guns

MR. MOORE pens a note redolent of personal anguish as well as of warning:

As you will see by the answers I am giving some of my correspondents there is a ——fool law over here about having to have a permit to carry a gun—or rather even to have a gun in your possession. Put the gang next, please! I don't want any visitor to this country insulted by being searched for weapons. Until the law is changed, and a few of us are after the scalps of the fanatics, it would be much safer for every American coming across here for a holiday to leave his gun at home.

Send question direct to expert in charge—NOT to the magazine.

"The White Man's Grave"

THAT'S the cheerful name that the Niger delta and the coasts of West Africa have earned for themselves:

Question:—"Kindly forward me some information in regard to Africa.

In order to make it most clear to you as to exactly what I wish to get at I will state that I am now thirty-five years of age, physically sound and not afraid of God, man or devil. I can operate either a steam or gas engine, can shoot fairly good, telegraph a little and pound a typewriter some. Can also railroad and have some knowledge of bookkeeping and office work.

During my school days I received a high-school and business-college education, but at no time since leaving school have I stayed in one place long enough to hold down a business position with any firm and would not consent to being tied down now under any consideration to any regular routine in any one place.

Have spent the most of my time with circuses and carnivals during the Summer season and railroading during the Winter, thus getting pretty much all over the United States, parts of Canada and Mexico; and to keep going as I have been is like traveling over old and beaten paths, which does not appeal to me any more; and in order to have a change and cover new territory I have turned my eyes toward Africa. But being without much definite information concerning the "Dark Continent" I have taken the liberty through "Ask Adventure" of turning to you for it. In order to simplify matters as much as possible I will put my request for information in the form of several questions, namely:

1. What are the climatic conditions and average temperature of the parts of Africa known to you?
2. What are the industries, and what sort of a position could a white man hope to get?
3. Are the natives tame or warlike?
4. Any chances to hunt game?
5. Are there any American trading-companies operating in any of the parts of Africa known to you? If so please furnish me with names and addresses of some of them.
6. In what respect would a man have to be especially qualified to secure a position with them or in this part of the world?
7. Would other than an Englishman have any chance of securing a position with an English trading-company? If so, please furnish me with names and addresses of some of them.
8. Is yellow or swamp fever prevalent in this part of Africa, and what are the preventatives?
9. Please furnish me with such other information as would be of interest to me concerning Africa or as would in your opinion be of interest to one who was contemplating going there and would be compelled to earn his way as he went, and which I have not specifically covered.

Now, Mr. Miller, I realize that I am presuming a very great deal upon your good nature in making this request to you for this information and also taking up much of your valuable time if you see fit to answer it; but I wish to assure you that I am very much interested in obtaining this information, and if you do see fit to kindly furnish me with it and also such other information concerning Africa, other than what I have specifically asked for, but which in your opinion would be of interest to me, I assure you that I will feel very greatly indebted to you.

If this letter should ever be printed in *Adventure* or elsewhere please withhold my name and address."—

——— ——— ———.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—It is a pleasure to answer a letter so definite in its questions as yours, and a letter that shows that the writer knows what he wants and takes pains correctly to express those wants. Sorry I am, then, that I can offer no great encouragement.

There are American trading-concerns in the Congo field, getting out mahogany and other timbers mostly. You will find their addresses in an international trade directory, which most of the larger public libraries have. The British firms have no hard-and-fast rule whom they take, but the competition is keen, particularly since the war, and naturally they want to see the man they are hiring. But with your qualifications and what I judge you to be from your letter I would say that if you were in London and dropped in on the Niger Company, Victoria Embankment, you would stand a chance; or when in Liverpool try John Holt & Company, West African Merchants.

The climate of West Africa is not healthy. In the interior it isn't so bad, but the Niger delta and the coasts have been called the White Man's Grave. The business of the companies is getting out the ivory, rubber, palm-oil, spices, etc., and in Northern Nigeria they are raising cotton. There are large barter stores employing whites; other whites are used on river steamers, in the small ship-yards and such places as pertain to a large organization.

The natives are mostly friendly to whites, though here and there a white runs up against the superstitions or in the back country runs into cannibalism. As for game, the licenses come very high; and all big game is under strict preservation laws, a license allowing the shooting of but one elephant. Hunting in Africa is very costly.

It is not easy to say what are the special qualifications for a position in West Africa. You are eliminated from government jobs, which mean rail, telegraph, mail and government steamer service.

The chief sickness of West Africa is malaria, and

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then blackwater. But a man who takes care of himself and doesn't stay out there too long—not more than three years at a stretch—can generally get by with no more than occasional fever.

I advise you to resort to your public library; locate the shelf devoted to West Africa and read "On Horseback through Nigeria," "West African Studies," and "In the Shadow of the Bush," etc.

Suppose you look up the American companies working the African field and write them. I am not allowed to give their names and addresses, as they are rather worried with applications. Yet it seems to me that a man such as your letter shows you to be would be snapped up.

Dog-Days and Snake-Blindness

THERE'S a connection between the two, though not exactly the one commonly supposed:

Question:—"To settle a discussion, kindly advise me if there is any foundation to the so-called "dog-days" and of snakes going blind during that period."—LESTER G. JONES, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—Dog-days follow the rising of the dog-star (Sirius) in the morning—the heliacal rising—just before sunrise. They are regarded usually, these days, as beginning July third and ending August eleventh. They were so called long ago, in Grecian, perhaps in Babylonian, days. They are the hottest, least healthful days of the year, especially in the eastern Mediterranean region. They have a very firm legendary, mythological and literary foundation, and you will find brief discussion of them in dictionaries, and lengthy dissertations on the subject in various authors.

Snakes go blind when they shed their skins. As the film gathers over their eyes at this period the poisonous snakes are exceedingly dangerous and strike about them with mad fear, so that rattlers cease to give warning, and other non-alarming snakes are more vicious in their attack, though, because unable to see, are less apt to strike one.

As the snakes shed during the Summer and commonly coincident with dog-days, they are popularly said to go blind in the dog-days. I hope this'll help you out.

Put at least five cents postage on all letters addressed to "Ask Adventure" editors who live outside the U. S. Always enclose at least five cents in International Reply Coupons for answer.

Arctic Oil-Fields

KEEP going, and in time you'll get there:

Question:—"I would be very glad if you could give me your valued assistance in the following case:

I am one of a party of four returned soldiers who intend making the journey to the Fort Norman oil-fields as soon as conditions permit. Although we are all used to leading an active out-of-doors life we have had no experience of the conditions prevailing in the Peace River district. We are going up there with the intention of making a long stay and would appreciate it if you could furnish us with the details in connection with equipment, etc., also giving us all information regarding trapping and hunting and license for same. Could you give us an approximate estimate of the cost of the essentials for this trip?"—T. A. WATSON, Drumheller, Alta., Canada.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—So far as your trapping and hunting are concerned you would do well to write the Chief Game Guardian, Edmonton, Alta., and have him send you a copy of the game laws. A trapping license will cost you $25, and an outfit of traps suitable for making a real business of the trip will cost you at least a thousand dollars. You will find plenty of timber to build you cabins of and to use for fuel, while the climate is not much more severe than you will have met with right where you are.

Now as to outfit for the oil-fields, I have had no experience along those lines. So much depends on the individual taste and requirement that what would seem to one man to be a plenty would fall far short of what another might want. You will have to pass through Edmonton on your trip; and you would do well to call on the Northern Trading Co. in the Albion Block and have a heart-to-heart talk with them.

They make a business of outfitting northern-bound parties as well as handling transportation on the Mackenzie River; and as they are highly recommended I have no hesitation in passing the name of the firm on to you.

Of course you realize that I have nothing to do with this outfit, and it would do you no good to mention my sending you to them since it is doubtful if they know I am on earth. Just go in on your high lonesome and tell them where you want to go and what you want to do when you get there. They have outfitting-posts all through the north, and for the independent trapper are even more courteous than the H. B. C. people, since these latter are really interested only in their own trappers.

As you are probably aware, Fort Norman is at the junction of the Bear and Mackenzie Rivers, and that is getting somewhat to the northward. There are two routes from Edmonton, one being by the Alberta & Great Waterways Ry. from Edmonton to McMurray (320 miles), steamer from McMurray to Fitzgerald (350 miles), sixteen-mile portage from Fitzgerald to Fort Smith and then by steamer to Fort Norman and the oil-fields, about 750 miles farther on. The total distance from Edmonton to the oil-fields is nearly 1,450 miles as the oil strike is still north from Fort Norman.

The alternative route is by the Edmonton, Dunvegan & B. C. to Peace River, then down the Peace by steamer to Fort Vermillion, portage here for the Vermillion Chutes and thence by steamer to Fitzgerald and as above.

On this trip you will run across one end of Lake Athabaska and will have over a hundred miles of a trip on the Great Slave Lake; and right here I might mention that Athabaska opens about June 1st and the Great Slave at least three weeks later.

There are two stern-wheelers on the route and a number of gas boats—that is, three or four—all controlled by the Northern Trading Co. The fare is about $85 for the trip to the oil-fields and $125 for

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the trip back, the difference being due to the upstream direction on the return. This does not include either berth or meals; and it will cost you about $3 per day to eat, while a berth will not be less than $1 per night.

I understand that there is a round-trip rate of $300 from McMurray to the oil-fields and return, which includes meals and berths. May I add that I believe this would be a darn good ticket to buy, since if you did not care to use it yourself you would probably have no difficulty in disposing of the return end of the slip.

Freight-rates from McMurray to Norman are about $10 per hundred.

I believe Fort McMurray is the place to outfit, but that would be up to you; and although I have done my best to tell you how to get there I want it distinctly understood that I am *not* urging you to make the trip.

Cattle-Raising in Mexico

VERY profitable—for the Mexican cattle-thieves:

Question:—"What parts of Mexico do you consider best suited for cattle-ranching? I raised cattle in Canada for over ten years. My capital is not very large. Please do not publish my name or address."— —— ——.

Answer, by Mr. Mahaffey:—Personally I think that the cattle business, especially for a person who does not speak much Spanish and is not thoroughly well acquainted with the people, would be a very poor business indeed, as it is the height of the ambition of 'most any Mexican to eat meat belonging to a gringo; and, as you may know, cattle are the hardest thing in the world to identify after the hide is off. At the first sign of trouble the first thing the rebels do is to take charge of any cattle in sight, especially any belonging to foreigners. The Mexican revolution has been called a "cow-eating contest," and I think it about right.

If a company have large capital they can watch over their stock fairly well; but a small rancher would in my opinion be at the mercy of any one who took a fancy for beef. Even if you catch a man killing one of your cattle it takes two disinterested witnesses to be able to do anything; and then they probably would let him off with a warning and tell him not to get caught next time.

Offhand it would be hard indeed to say just what part of Mexico would be the best as there are many tastes, and all depends upon many circumstances which I do not know of. It depends also if you want to buy a ranch or rent. I would suggest that you write to the Mexico City paper, *El Universal*, asking them for their rates for classified advertising—I think it is 5c Mex a word each time—and if you wish, send them a New York draft for $5 or $6 with copy of the ad and ask them to run it as long as the money lasts. As this paper is sent all over the country you will get replies from all over and can form an idea of what is offered.

The country south and lying back of the coast from Mazatlan would be a fair location, especially considering your present location; and you could also send an ad to the *Correo de la Tarde*, Mazatlan, inquiring as to a ranch. I would suggest the following ad in Spanish:

"Se desea comprar un rancho propio para ganado, con pasto c agua para —— cabezas de reces. Dirigirse a ——, —— (Your address here), E. U. A.

Personally I would not go into the cattle business for the above reasons, and would advise you to think it over before venturing.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing but reply postage.

Canoeing Down the Mississippi

WHAT! All the way down from Lake Pepin? Yes! All the way down from Lake Pepin!

Question:—"I have a friend who is intensely interested in making a canoe-trip down the Mississippi River from its headwaters to its mouth.

My friend has had some experience in handling a canoe and knows something of how to handle one. I have had almost no experience with canoes but am familiar with several types of small boats as I have fished for market and for sport along the Gulf coast both inshore and offshore.

I have had some experience in camping out and know a little about taking care of myself in camp. My friend has not had much camping out.

Now what I would like to know is this: What kind of an outfit would you recommend? I would like you to go into as much detail on the outfit and about canoe trips in general as you have time to spare. Begin with the canoe and go through everything needed.

Also I would like to know what is the nearest town on the railroad?

What time of year is best to make a start and what is the minimum time possible to make the trip? Not that we want to race through the trip but we want to know approximately the time necessary.

Do you know anybody who has made this trip?

Please do not publish my name or address."— —— ——, Dallas, Tex.

Answer, by Mr. St. John:—I do not know any one who has canoed the entire length of the Mississippi; but it would be a fine trip if you did not have to hurry, and an easy one with the exception of 15 miles or so through Lake Pepin, about 50 miles below St. Paul. This is almost dead water; but you could be towed through if you did not want to paddle it. You would want a good-sized canoe, nothing less than an 18 footer, preferably a lake model as the big river is rough at times.

Your tent should be small. The Compac or some canoe model that uses but one pole or can be tied out between trees with a rope ridge, is what you would need. The pole could be jointed and carried along.

You would want a simple camp-cook kit of some kind and duffel-bags for provisions, bedding and personal stuff.

You could buy your provisions at the towns along the river, so you would not have to carry much foodstuff. You would need blankets, of course; and the ¾-length rubber air mattress would be a great comfort; weighs only 4 pounds and blows up, making a nice springy bed without bother of gathering brush. Of course you want a big rubber blanket to go over

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your duffel, and ponchos to wear in rainy weather. Don't forget a light ax, lantern and flashlight, and a water-proof match-box. The beauty of such a trip is that you are always in striking distance of supplies, so you won't have to carry much with you.

You could put in at Bemidji.

I hesitate to estimate how long the trip would take as it depends on how fast you travel. That is, how little time you put in loafing on the way; but you could always ship home when you decide to quit if you don't make it all in the one trip.

Send question direct to expert in charge—NOT to the magazine.

Sarawak as a Game Territory

ANOTHER question and answer from Gordon MacCreagh, received before his departure last Winter on an exploration trip to South America. Mr. MacCreagh's "Ask Adventure" work has been taken over by Captain Beverley Giddings. See page 185, section 25. Captain Giddings is also conducting a new section (31) devoted to Tripoli:

Question:—"Would like to get a little information on the island of Borneo.

Am an oil-worker and have a chance to go to Borneo to work for the Royal Dutch Shell Oil Co. in the British territory of Sarawak. Would like to know if it is a healthy country for a white man, if there are any hostile natives there and what kind of hunting one would have there and what would be necessary clothing to take with me.

I asked the representative of the company I am to work for about it, but he didn't seem to know anything so I write to you.

I have a .22 and a .32 Winchester special rifle. Would it be advisable to take them with me?"—NICHOLAS SUHAYDA, Corcoran, Cal.

Answer, by Mr. MacCreagh:—Climate in the western part of Sarawak where the oil is is hot and humid; not the kind of climate which suits a white man best; but that doesn't mean that whites can't live and be reasonably healthy in it. You must be careful of yourself of course; you can't take the chances that you might here. But there's nothing for a man to be afraid of.

There are no hostile natives. You will find the Dyaks very docile and pleasant to get along with. Rather keen hunters too.

Don't take any clothing from here. You can buy all you want, suited to the country and the climate, right in Brunei.

If you want to do some hunting you will surely get a big variety in Borneo; a one-day trip from the oil-fields will take you into big game. Your .22 won't be of much use to you; but your .32 Winchester Special ought to do for anything short of rhinoceros.

I would recommend a twelve-gage shotgun too; for there will be countless times when you can take a stroll out of an evening and bring home any of a dozen different kinds of pheasant for supper. But be sure that it's a twelve; for you will positively not find cartridges for any other gage out there. Ammunition will be plentiful in Brunei for all your battery.

Changing Lights

TWO of our "Ask Adventure" experts have been asked about the same thing in the same month, both inquirers writing from points in the Southwest, though several hundred miles apart. As a coincidence, if it is one, this is interesting to say the least. Maybe it is a phenomenon attendant upon a general climatic change:

Question:—"1. Why is it that at night in this district (Imperial Valley about ten miles southwest of Calexico) all distant lights appear to continually change color, flashing from red to green, then to white, etc?

2. The irrigation canals here seem to contain a fair number of fish. Can you tell me what species are most likely to be found here—how to recognize them, and whether edible?"—T. ARTHURS, Calexico, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—The only explanation that occurs to my mind for the lights changing as you say they do, is the rising of gases from the earth after the heat of the day.

I never heard of it before and do not know the reason. The above is my guess. I advise you to write to University of California, Dept. of Science, Berkeley, and ask for an explanation.

I shall put it up to a professor in U. S. C. whom I know, and see what he thinks about it. . . .

I have just called him up and he says it may come from dust, from moisture in the air or from varying degrees of cold, which causes a variation in the refraction of light and divides the rays differently. He says that my theory of rising gas may be a factor in the action. So there you have four causes, any one or all of which may be present.

As for the fish—they are most probably mullet and bony tail. They are edible fish and have been food for the Indians for ages. The mullet is a member of the sucker family—cousin to the carp. I can't give you the family name of the bony tail.

The mullet will show the same pucker mouth as the common sucker.

To go back to the lights. Did you ever notice a light through rising clouds of heated air or vapor? They change color often then. The rippling waves of hot, moisture-laden air act like a prism and give you various primal colors. That is the way the light is being broken up down there, in my opinion—by some essence that is rising between your eye and the light itself.

And now for the companion, and in a sense complementary, question and answer:

Question:—"I am not quite sure if the question I wish to ask is within your power to answer or not. However, as your territory covers Texas perhaps you can explain this incident.

On my farm here there is a small hill, and on top of this I have noticed on several occasions a bright red ball of fire rising from the ground to a height of

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about four feet. It comes up and remains for a few minutes, then slowly dies out. It reminds one of the setting sun, as it is quite red. I got a line on it from two directions and marked the spot where the angles meet, and as far as I can see the ground is not any different at this point from its surroundings.

I was told it could be caused from buried metals or dead bodies. Is there any case on record where it was found this was caused from any of the above? It always comes up in the same spot and does not float around, as I have heard jack-o'-lanterns do.

I'll appreciate all the information you can give me on this subject.

I haven't done any digging as yet to learn the cause of this light; not that I was in any way afraid to do so, but because I felt it a waste of time to do so. Now if this question is not in your particular line will you kindly forward this letter to some one who you believe can give me an explanation?"—

———.

Answer, by Mr. Whiteaker:—Your letter is of a very interesting nature—more suited to a scientist than a subject to be threshed out by an *Adventure* editor; but since I've known of several similar cases I do not mind telling you what I know about the phenomenon.

No doubt there is a deposit of mineral on your property at that point, either in small or large quantities. Phosphorescence is the property which some substances possess of giving off light after they have been exposed to light and then to darkness. Among the phosphorescent substances are barium, calcium, sugar and diamonds.

Sometimes the phos—light—is brilliantly colored, and its color is known to bear a certain relation to the kind of light that fell upon it. Calcite gives an orange light after exposure to sunlight; argonite under the same circumstances gives a greenish light.

The red glow of the sky from the setting sun just about dusk causes what appears to be the ball of fire that is seen. The light has to strike the vapor at a certain angle, and the atmospheric conditions have to be just right in order for you to see the ball of red light. Certain mineral substances exhibit the phenomenon when exposed to the sun, to heat, to friction, to electricity or to cleavage.

Phosphorescence is a form of fluorescence, sometimes a chemical, other times a physical action. It has nothing to do with phosphorus or with the shining of phosphorus, which is due to a chemical change, as is noted where bones have been buried, birds and fowls roosting, and where vegetable plants have decomposed; you can see by disturbing the dirt on a damp, dark night the dim light of phosphorus, which, when exposed to the air at common temperatures, undergoes slow combustion, emits a white vapor of a peculiar odor and is gradually consumed without rising from the ground.

Fluorid of calcium is of frequent occurrence in connection with beds of silver, tin, lead and cobalt ores. It is sometimes colorless and transparent; but more frequently it exhibits tints of yellow, green, blue and red. Fluor spar, or fluorid of calcium, is used as a flux in metallurgy and is a source of hydrofluoric acid, which readily etches glass.

As I said above I have heard of several such incidents before; and if it was my business I would keep mum on the subjects to my neighbors and do a little prospecting on the quiet. You may have a valuable bed of cobalt or other mineral on your land. Dig up some of the dirt at the point where you saw the light and have a chemist analyze it to see what it contains.

You may dig into the mound of an Indian's grave; but the phosphorus lime of bones has no gas about them to cause the vapor to rise above the ground.

There are many kinds of minerals, some natural gas and petroleum pools in this county and vicinity, and you may be one of the lucky ones to discover something of value. I do not want to raise any false hopes in your breast, but still it may be worth while to investigate.

Do not work around that spot during an electric storm, for the lightning may strike there at any time.

I would like to know how you come out with your investigation.

Put at least five cents postage on all letters addressed to "Ask Adventure" editors who live outside the U. S. Always enclose at least five cents in International Reply Coupons for answer.

Homesteading in Hawaii

THAT'S "talking of something that ain't"—or almost ain't:

Question:—"Can I shoot a seal once in a while on the coast of your islands like I do in Alaska? I would like some land in Hawaii, but would it not take me six years to clear an acre of any land I could homestead? Don't the middlemen hold prices too low for a beginner to make much?

If I could clear one acre and make $200 the first year I believe I could get prosperous thereafter with that much knowledge and experience.

I suppose your fish and hunting don't amount to much. Here fishing is poor in Winter and hunting is not legal in Summer. I have had much dairy experience. Are ticks very bad for stock?

I might take a place on terms of paying rent by land clearing or other improvements.

I don't believe the wages in the islands would pay me to work for wages there, but I would like to run my own place.

I have taken prizes in the States for potatoes, beets, beans, etc., but I want to own my own land eventually in a warmer climate even though I be on some high plateau where I can not grow everything.

I wish I could hand you a piece of this moose meat.

Find stamped, self-addressed envelope enclosed."
—C. A. McCallister, Homer, Alaska.

Answer, by Mr. Halton:—I regret that your conception of Hawaii is so unlike the real article that I am bound to disappoint you in this reply. Lying as they do in the tropical zone, there are no seals to be found in the waters of Hawaii. The land situation is also one regarding which I can give you no encouragement, being volcanic in origin; and many thousands of acres are still in the process of disintegration.

There is very little available land for cultivation. The land that is already under cultivation is controlled by the sugar and pineapple interests.

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In the course of time it might be possible to obtain small homesteads, as it is the policy of the Territorial Government to throw open for homestead such government tracts as are now leased to the planters. Communication with the Land Department at Honolulu will bring forth the information regarding the next drawing for homesteads and the process by which such drawings are made.

We have no big game in the islands. There is good hunting when it comes to the smaller birds, and on some of the islands are to be found wild goats. Fishing, however, is excellent. The waters of Hawaii abound in game fish.

If you have had experience in ranching it is possible to obtain employment on some of the big ranches in the islands of Maui or Hawaii, and in the meantime it might give you an opportunity of filing for drawing when such lands are thrown open for homesteading. Generally speaking, however, you will find that a white man could not make a success of small farming in the Hawaiian Islands for the reason that he would have to compete with Orientals; and with their widely different mode of living, this would be impossible.

I regret I can not be more encouraging.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

WOULD like to hear from any of the boys who served with me in H. C. 15th Inf. D Co. 31st Inf. or C Co. 8th Inf. Daddy Foster, Pop Faust, Steve, Bug Moore, Hot Cakes, Jane, write to me.—Address FRANK M. BOBB, care of D. Bar Ranch, Woodruff, Utah.

DUBEY, LOUIS AORIL COLE. Age eighteen, height five feet ten inches; weight 170 pounds, black hair, dark eyes, Roman nose. Occupation, lumberjack. Last heard of at Renton, Wash. early in 1920. Information will be appreciated.—Address Mother.—MRS. L. DUBEY, 640 5th Ave., Kent, Wash.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

GORE, LENA. May go by name of Lena Crawford: Last seen in Grand Rapids, Mich., April, 1918. Any one knowing her whereabouts please write.—Address GEORGE W. GORE, Co. D, 23rd U. S. Inf., 2nd Div., Camp Travis, Texas.

SPALDING, RAPLH H. Lived in Weehawken or Union Hill, N. J. in October, 1919, and seen about March, 1920, at Hotel St. Blaise, New York. Any information will be appreciated.—Address M. GROSSENBACH, Cassel, Germany or ED. PETERS, Rome, Ga.

D'AUBERT, VINCENT. May be in New Orleans, Pacific States, British Columbia or Alaska. Was in 2nd Batry. P. R. Bttn. 6th F. A. Ft. Myer, 1917 and at La Courtine, Creuse with Col. "Spike" Hennessy's F. A. Replacement Regt. 1918. Any information will be appreciated.—Address A. WESTCOTT, No. Castine, Me.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

PLAUL, HENRY. Vice-President of Sonora Exploration and Metals Co., South America. Last heard of in San Javier, Mexico, with the same company. Missing since July, 1916. Any information will be appreciated.—Address JOHN W. HOOGERWERF, Headq. Co. 9th F. A., Fort Sill, Okla.

FORD, ROBERT. Born in Akeld, County of Northumberland, England. Left England about 1910. Nephew (son of his sister Isabella) would like to hear from him.—Address F. C. N. DODD, 1682 Peters Ave., New Orleans, La.

HULL, HARRY H. Son of A. N. Hull. Last heard of in British Columbia, Canada. Age about forty, weight 180 pounds, height five feet nine inches; blue eyes, light hair and complexion. Any information will be appreciated.—Address A. N. HULL, Hotel Lemhi, Salmon, Idaho.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

MORRIS, CECIL EDWARD (JACK). Write to your brother, C. L. M., care of *Adventure.*

KOROLDEN, CHARLES J. Last heard of in Flint, Mich. Home in New Bedford, Mass. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—Address CPL. REX THOMPSON, 10th Co. C. A. C., Ft. Randolph, Canal Zone.

KING, DAVID FILLMORE. Medium build, height about six feet, red complexion, auburn hair. Last heard of in Texas oil-fields, August, 1920. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Sister, MRS. E. J. EATON, P. O. Box 72, Ball Ground, Ga.

"BILLY." Let me hear from you. Do you ever think of your D. S.?—Address M. L., care of *Adventure.*

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

HAMMON, W. P. Last heard of about ten years ago, working on Interurban between Dallas and Denison, Texas. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address, G. H. HAMMON, 2721 Pepper Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.

ALDERMAN, JOHN. Last heard of at Junction City, 1918. Please write your friend.—Address B. J. DE PEW, Box 474, Healdton, Okla.

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QUICK, JACK S. Last heard of in Dallas, Texas. Occupation, automobile mechanic. Have important information for him. Please get in touch with me at once.—Address A. L. R., care of *Adventure*.

STRINGER, JESSE L. Last heard of in Macea, Ariz. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address Pvt. S. J. LECK, Co. 115, 3rd Regiment, U. S. M. C., Santo Domingo, D. R.

THE following have been inquired for in either the Mid-June or First-July issues of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:

ABBOTS, ALBERT; Adams, Jesse; Anzini, Henry V.; Bittel, George; Boyd, Asa; Brieger, Arthur; Bronk, Henry; Burke, Max; Burns, J. M.; Carr, Isaac, Scott; Chandler, Ethel M.; Coles, Harry A.; Conenen, George; Daly, A. T.; Dawson, William J.; Donegan, Joseph T.; Erricson, James; Farrington, I. H.; Field, Wm. H.; Fitzgerald, Garrat; Fox, Albert, Florence, Albertine, Thomas and Alice; Hall, Dr. W. W.; Halsell, "Puss"; Hamilton, Charles; Henderson, Jack; James, Frank, Johanson; Kane, Richard Miller; Kennedy, James A.; King, Clarence; King, Jim; Kotelman, Harry T.; Lake, Arthur Lewis; Larurie, R. C.; Lawson, Harry or Hammy; McCaul, Peter; McFarland, Earl; Milnthorp, John or Henry; McPherson, Kenneth; Miller, George M.; Miller, Walter Harcourt; Moore, Harry A.; Moses, Reuben; Newberry, Floyd; Raney, B. O.; Rattray, John; Redding, Earl F.; Reigh, James; Sadusky, Joseph; Sholea, Sgt. J. J.; Smith, Albert; Smity, Curtis Wm.; Snook, Mrs. Anna E.; Soeding, Harry; Taggart, Helen Alice; Taylor, Wm. W.; Thomas, Geo. Washington; Turner, John; Van Wyck, Thomas McLoughlin; Vaughn, Roger D.; Walker, Geo. Francis; Watkins, R. W.; Wendler, William D.; Wheeler, Andrew J.; Wheeler, Charles; White, Theodore Jr.; Whitlocke, J. E.; Wurtha, Charles.

MISCELLANEOUS:—A. E. F. men from 310th Machine Gun Batt. Co. B, 79th Div.; Batt. B Bt. French Art. Members; Boys of Base Hopsital at Mesves, Nievre, France; Canadians, Old pals of the 1st Dept. Batt. Manitoba, Regt. Coates, Landrigan, Bumby, Keller, Richards, Kirkpatrick, McGrew and any others who survived the Big Show; Chamblee, Pat; Barlow, Frank and Fredins of Buoy 13, Pensacola, Fla.; Friends in 37th Co. U. S. Marines, Camaguey, Cuba 110th Irish Inf. Overseas Batt. Canadian Ex. Force (Ft. Wadsworth N. Y.) Batt. D, 20th Field Art. U. S. Army; Goodlett, Elmer F.; Speicht, Guy; Relatives Mrs. Meffond Wintermute.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Byron Chisholm; Wm. S. Hilles; A. B. Paradis; G. E. Hungerford; E. E. S. Atkins; E. Murphy; A. Gaylord; E. J. Moran; F. S. Emerson; H. E. Warner; L. E. Patten; T. T. Bennett; Sinn Cardie; James Mosse; C. E. Wilson; R. W. Kimsey; S. C. Helston; P. Brady; Patrick O'Farrell; C. Wilman.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

ALDRIDGE, F. P.; Allen, Paul; Barrett, Raymond; Beaton, G. M.; Mr. and Mrs. Bennett; Bertsch, Elizabeth; Blighton, Frank; Bonner, J. S.; Bromell, Mr.; Buckley, Ray; Butterfield, E.; Carpenter, Robert S.; Carr, John; Casselberry, Lane P.; "Chink"; Chisholm, D. F. K.; Clark, Ernest S.; Clark, Wilfred J.; Cleve, Jim; Clingham, Charles; Coles, Bobby; Connor, A. M.; Cook, Elliott, D.; Cook, William N.; Corbett, Fred P.; Curtis, D. A.; Courtlandt, Victor; Craun, Galen E.; Erwin, Phillip; Fisher, 1st Sgt. R.; Gale, Geo. A.; Gallagher, Owen; Hale, Robert E.; Harris, Walter J.; Haskins, S. S.; Hoffman, J. M.; Hooker, Wm. Francis; Howard, Charlie; Hughes, Frank E.; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Irving, Thos. L.; Jackson, Robert R.; King, Chas. C.; Kuckaby, William Francis; Kutcher, Sgt. Harry; Lafler, Mrs. Harry; Lancaster, C. E.; Lander, Harry; Larisey, Jack; Lee, Wm. R., M.D.; Lekki, Michael; "Lonely Jock"; Lovett, Harold S.; MacDonald, Tony; McAdams, W. S.; MacKay, D. C.; Mackintosh, D. T. A.; McNair, Henry S.; Mendelson, Aleck; Nelson, Frank Lovell; Noe, Leslie D.; Nylander, Towne J.; O'Hara, Jack; Parker, Dr. M.; Parker, G. A.; Parrott, Pvt. D. C.; Phillips, Buffington; Phipps, Corbett C.; Pigeon, A. H.; Posner, Geo. A.; Pulis, H. F.; Raines, Wm. L.; Rich, Wagoner, Bob; Roberts, Walter; Rogan, Chas. B.; Rudolph, F.; Rundle, Merrill G.; Ryder, H. S.; St. Claire, Fred; Schmidt, G.; Scott, James F.; Shaw, Albert; Sloan, Charles A.; Smith, C. O.; Starr, Ted; Stocking, C. B.; Strong, Clarence B.; Taylor, C. W.; Van Tyler, Chester; Von Gelucke, Byron; Ward, Frank B.; Weintrauk, H. W.; Wiley, Floyd; Williams, Capt. W. P.; Wood, George; J. C. H.; W. W. T.; S 177284; L. T. 439; Third Officer, S.S. *Lake Elmdale*; WS-XV.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address L. B. BARRETTO, care of *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD
FIRST AUGUST ISSUE

Here are nine other stories that will run in our next issue in addition to the serial and complete novelette mentioned on the second contents page:

THE BRANDING OF OLIVER. An Off-the-Trail Story — *Edwin M. Slocombe*
A cowboy tries to rope a new kind of critter.

TOOLS — *L. Patrick Greene*
A skein of counter-scheming in Africa, with an empire as the prize.

SORCERY AND EVERHARD. A Four-Part Story. Conclusion — *Gordon Young*
San Francisco Bay runs blood.

BELOW THE MARK — *G. A. Wells*
Fire and mutiny on the sinking ship.

THE REVENGE OF MALACHI DODDRICK — *W. Townend*
Steamship engineers fall out.

THE AZTEC TOPAZ — *Walter A. Dyer*
Mysterious hieroglyphics that traced death.

THE PASSING OF JOHN RINGOLD. An Article — *Frederick R. Bechdolt*
A hard man who died hard.

LOCAL COLOR IN LOCO-LAND — *W. C. Tuttle*
Tenderfoot authors find Paradise anything but.

BLOOD MONEY. A Tale of the Brethren of the Main — *Rafael Sabatini*
Doom *vs.* a pirate and his wits.

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"The Best Hunch I Ever Had!"

"It happened just three years ago. I was eling pretty blue. Pay day had come around gain and the raise I'd hoped for wasn't there. t began to look as though I was to spend my fe checking orders at a small salary.

"I picked up a magazine to read. It fell pen at a familiar advertisement, and a coupon ared me in the face. Month after month for ears I'd been seeing that coupon, but never ntil that moment had I thought of it as eaning anything to me. But this time I ad the advertisement twice—*yes, every word!*

"Two million men, it said, had made that oupon the first stepping stone toward success. n every line of business, men were getting plendid salaries because they had torn out that oupon. Mechanics had become foremen and perintendents—carpenters had become archi- cts and contractors—clerks *like me* had be- me sales, advertising and business managers cause they had used that coupon.

"Suppose that I . . ? What if by studying home nights I really could learn to do some- ing besides check orders? I had a hunch to d out—and then and there I tore out that oupon, marked it, and mailed it.

"That was the turn in the road for me. he Schools at Scranton suggested just the ourse of training I needed and they worked ith me every hour I had to spare.

"In six months I was in charge of my division. a year my salary had been doubled. And I've een advancing ever since. Today I was appointed manager of our Western office at $5,000 a year. Tearing out that coupon three years ago was the best hunch I ever had."

For thirty years, the International Correspondence Schools have been helping men to win promotion, to earn more money, to have happy, prosperous homes, to get ahead in business and in life.

You, too, can have the position you want in the work you like best. Yes, you can! All we ask is the chance to prove it.

Without cost, without obligation, just mark and mail this coupon. Do it right now!

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INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BOX 2004-C SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, *before* which I mark X.

- ☐ ELECTRICAL ENGINEER
- ☐ Electric Lighting and Rwys.
- ☐ Electric Wiring
- ☐ Telegraph Engineer
- ☐ Telephone Work
- ☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEER
- ☐ Mechanical Draftsman
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Toolmaker
- ☐ Gas Engine Operating
- ☐ CIVIL ENGINEER
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ MINE FOREMAN OR ENG.
- ☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER
- ☐ Marine Engineer
- ☐ Ship Draftsman
- ☐ ARCHITECT
- ☐ Contractor and Builder
- ☐ Architectural Draftsman
- ☐ Concrete Builder
- ☐ Structural Engineer
- ☐ PLUMBING AND HEATING
- ☐ Sheet Metal Worker
- ☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
- ☐ CHEMIST
- ☐ Pharmacy
- ☐ SALESMANSHIP
- ☐ ADVERTISING
- ☐ Window Trimmer
- ☐ Show Card and Sign Ptg.
- ☐ Railroad Positions
- ☐ ILLUSTRATING
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- ☐ BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
- ☐ Private Secretary
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- ☐ BOOKKEEPER
- ☐ Stenographer and Typist
- ☐ Cert. Public Accountant
- ☐ TRAFFIC MANAGER
- ☐ Railway Accountant
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ GOOD ENGLISH
- ☐ Common School Subjects
- ☐ CIVIL SERVICE
- ☐ Railway Mail Clerk
- ☐ AUTOMOBILES
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Navigation
- ☐ AGRICULTURE
- ☐ Poultry Raising
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Banking

Write name and address here

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Present Occupation_____ Business Address_____ 3-1-21

Street and No._____

City_____ State_____

Canadians may send this coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

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"You Never Made That GOWN YOURSELF!"

THE *style* of it says "Paris," the *finish* of it whispers "exclusive shop" or "Parisian modiste"—small wonder that people hesitate to believe that such an achievement *could* be "home-made!" BUT—if the strict truth be whispered, she didn't do it quite "all by herself." For in making it she had what no woman could possibly have before—the actual assistance of the *original* designer, cutter and creator of the gown—through

The Marvelous New Picture Guide

THE DELTOR

That Saves 50c to $10, or More, on Materials Alone

By a "PICTURE CHART," the *Deltor* shows you exactly how the expert cutter would lay out *every* size, *every* view of your pattern, on *every* width of suitable material, to get the most marvelously economical use of the goods. And with the chart before you, you can *instantly* do what it took the expert hours to work out!

By a "PICTURE GUIDE," the *Deltor* shows you exactly *how* the expert fitter joined each piece to the next. It makes every single step so *plain* that, without the least effort, you almost unconsciously achieve that perfect "set" of collar, sleeve—*every* part—which is the despair of all but the artists of the famous shops of Paris or Fifth Avenue.

By "FINISHING HINTS," the *Deltor* gives you *all* those clever little tricks—those means of securing distinction in ornament, trimming and finishing—that so absolutely differentiate the *finished* charm of Parisian handiwork from either "home-made" or "ready-made."

The *Deltor* now accompanies every new Butterick pattern—giving you, in addition to Butterick's Parisian style, the ability to create the exact counterpart of what heretofore only Paris or Fifth Avenue could produce. Ask for "Butterick pattern with *Deltor*" for the very next garment you plan to make.

BUTTERICK

Style Leaders of the World

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